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No. 310

BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

MARION SHORT

*Based upon a Two Act Comedy by Bessie Wreford
Nourse Entitled "When Willy Came Home
from Yale."*

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES.

ACT I.—Sitting room of the Simmons home in Farmdale.

ACT II.—A room in Mrs. Kirkland's New York home.

ACT III.—Ante-room in Elaine Jewett's home in New York.

ACT IV.—Same as Act I.

NOTE:—*The same interior may be used for all the acts with judicious change of furnishings.*

TIME:—*The present.*

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS.

WILLIAM BARKELEY. Has a personality suggesting the most pleasing type of young college man, physically attractive and mentally up-to-date. He is always well dressed, but without ostentation.

CHARLES MASON. A well-mannered chap used to good society.

LLOYD HENDERSON. A trifle older and more settled in manner than the others of his fraternity.

TEDDY FARNUM. Very much the society type, young, impulsive, superficial. Distinctly a comedy character.

MRS. KIRKLAND. A middle-aged woman of commanding appearance, at once gracious and imperious, and faultlessly attired.

4 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

MRS. SIMMONS. She is a typical countrywoman, hospitable and kind hearted. Her clothing suggests the country dressmaker, but is not in the least grotesque.

BETSY SCROGGINS. She is a slip-shod young servant girl, unkempt, countrified, very slow spoken, smiling, sentimental, and above all, lazy.

MISS SLISSY. A spinster, tall, thin, inquisitive, sharptongued, with an eccentric manner of dressing the hair, and a fondness for cheap jewelry and over fussiness in attire.

ELAINE JEWETT. Smartly gowned, well poised, with a manner self centered and rather unsympathetic except where her own affections are concerned.

TRELLA JEWETT. Exceedingly frail and spirituelle in appearance, gentle-voiced and sweet. She is younger and more appealing than Elaine.

PATSY CLOVERLEAF. A stylish, likeable type of society girl, all smiles and chatter.

MARY ANNE SIMMONS. She is pretty, refined, and modest, but with warm-hearted, unconventional ways which add to her natural attractiveness. A young and slender girl with large, expressive eyes and beautiful hair, and with the gift of personal magnetism, would most nearly approach the ideal type for this character.

EXTRAS:—The guests are in ball-room attire. Mrs. Kirkland's maid wears the conventional clothes belonging to her position.

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE

ACT I.

SCENE:—*Sitting-room of the SIMMONS country home in Farmdale. The furniture is old fashioned and may be, if desired, of the walnut and horsehair variety. There is a table at C. containing books and a large lamp. Sofa at L. Arm chair at R. Other chairs ad lib. Mantelpiece and window at R. Door C. in flat and at L. Old fashioned portraits in crayon on the wall. Ornaments on the mantelpiece in keeping with the furniture. When door C. is open, a garden backing is disclosed.*

TIME:—*June.*

DISCOVERED:—*MRS. SIMMONS and BETSY, with sleeves rolled up, dusting the furniture. MISS SLISSY, consciously smoothing out her new dress and fooling with the buttons of her transparent gloves is seated on the sofa. Her hat is garishly trimmed with flowers.*

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Continuing the conversation in progress*) And she gave me no warnin' at all, just telegraphed in the mornin' she'd be here in the afternoon. Why, I'd calculated to house-clean a whole week before she got here, to have things lookin' right!

MISS SLISSY. Dust is terrible this time of the

6 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

year, especially when folks live like you do on the dusty side of the road.

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Attacking another piece of furniture with dust-cloth*) You'll excuse me for goin' right ahead, won't you, Miss Slissy? There ain't any time to lose.

MISS SLISSY. (*Her manner one of plaintive reproach*) Certainly I'll excuse you, though I did come over to set the afternoon, and we hain't talked more'n a couple of hours.

MRS. SIMMONS. Some other time I'd be glad to have you spend the day but——

MISS SLISSY. (*Interrupting, rather acidly*) Ain't askin' me to go home, be you?

MRS. SIMMONS. Of course I ain't, Sairy Applegate Slissy, but I know when you go visitin' you don't want people to be sewin', or doin' house-work, or anything to interrupt your conversation, and I'm just obliged to keep right on. (*Moves to another piece of furniture*) You certainly do know more about the neighbors than any other three women in town.

(BETSY carries a filled scrap-basket off L.)

MISS SLISSY. (*Proudly*) I try to. I think it's some one's duty to find out what's goin' on, or what would folks do for somethin' to talk about? Where's Mary Anne?

MRS. SIMMONS. She's gone to the garden after some flowers. She knows her Aunt Rhoda is fond of 'em, and she calculates to put 'em all over the house.

MISS SLISSY. Dear me, suz! And when it's only a relative. But of course I s'pose Rhoda havin' so much money does make a difference.

MISS SIMMONS. (*Quickly resents the idea*) No it doesn't, Sairy Applegate! We'd fix up for her just the same if she didn't have a penny. Mary

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 7

Anne simply loves and worships her Aunt Rhoda, and her aunt does her. Now why don't Betsy get back to help me? (*She goes to L. and calls off*) Betsy! (*Turns to Miss SLISSY*) That girl's the laziest mortal that ever drew the breath of life. (*Calls again*) Betsy!

BETSY. (*Drawls from off L.*) Ye-es'm!

MRS. SIMMONS. Come here. (*BETSY slouches in, carrying empty scrap-basket*) What do you mean a settin' on that back step as if there was nothin' to do but gaze at the woodshed.

BETSY. (*Lazily*) I wasn't gazin' at the woodshed.

MRS. SIMMONS. Then what was you gazin' at, please?

BETSY. (*With much satisfaction*) The hired man. He has on a pair of new boots.

MRS. SIMMONS. Well, if I set you to dustin' the hired man, I reckon for once you'd stick to your work. He's the only article you seem able to keep your mind on. Wipe under that table. (*BETSY, with much deliberation, proceeds to obey*) My goodness, that dust looks as if it had been there ever since Noah occupied the ark.

MISS SLISSY. (*To Mrs. SIMMONS*) They say your sister is a millionairess, and that her husband, Tom Kirkland, made his money sellin' cattle.

MRS. SIMMONS. Cattle? He didn't.

MISS SLISSY. Well, some one told me he speculated in bulls and bears, so I included 'em in one general name to be more elegant. And they do say he never goes near the pasture, but sets right there in his office buyin' and sellin' stock. She'll make quite a stay with you, won't she?

MRS. SIMMONS. I hope so. She'd tired and needs a rest. (*Turns to BETSY*) You needn't keep on rubbin' like them legs had a case of rheumatism. They're clean by this time. Let down

8 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

that window curtain, and straighten the mantel-piece.

(BETSY *slowly rises, walks with flapping slippers to the mantelpiece and begins to arrange ornaments.*)

MISS SLISSY. I can't see why your sister should be tired. She keeps three hired girls, I've heard tell.

BETSY. (*Turns, with a dust-cloth in one hand and an ornament in the other*) Mm! And she wears silk night-gowns, silk all over!

MRS. SIMMONS. (*To BETSY*) You ain't let down them curtains yet. (*BETSY undoes one lace curtain, and lets it fall in place, then stands staring through the window at something that interests her outside*) If that girl could just roll up a silk night-gown and turn into a human caterpillar, I don't believe she'd exchange places with an angel.

MISS SLISSY. No one expects much of Betsy, but I wouldn't have thought the sister of a good church goin' woman like you would indulge in such Babylonian extravagance as silk nightgowns. I wear seersucker ones that don't even have to be ironed, and I calculate she ain't any better'n I be.

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Highly indignant*) Well, whether she's better than you be or not, my sister wears silk stockin's too, if you want to know it, Sairy Applegate Slissy, and has automobiles, and spans of horses, and farms she calls country-seats, and goes to Europe, Asia or Africy on a day's notice, if the notion strikes her, and if she does it's her own business, and her own money she's a spendin', and I don't think you'd better set up nights worryin' about her bein' Babylonian!

MISS SLISSY. (*With exaggerated surprise*) Dear me, to think of your flyin' off the handle like that, just because I was quotin' Scripture.

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 9

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Slightly apologetic*) I reckon I am nervous over gettin' cleanin' done so late. Betsy, what on earth are you starin' at?

BETSY. (*Turns regretfully from window*) The hired man. (*Lets down the other curtain*)

MRS. SIMMONS. Good land! Is the hired man on all sides of the house at once?

BETSY. (*Eagerly turns toward window again*) I'll look and see.

MRS. SIMMONS. No you'll not! Come away from that window! (*BETSY sighs and turns from window*) Land sakes, that girl hain't no more sense of humor than a guinea hen! (*Addressing BETSY*) Go on out in the kitchen and scour up them pans I left in the sink. And if you find the hired man on that side, ask him to take off his boots so you can put 'em on the mantelshelf as an ornament for you to look at.

BETSY. Ye-es'm. (*Exits L.*)

MRS. SIMMONS. For the love of goodness, I believe she thought I meant it! Ain't got no more sense of humor——

(*Enter MARY ANNE C., with arms full of flowers.*)

MARY ANNE. (*Speaking as she enters*) Aunt Rhoda likes the pink ones best—(*Stops, seeing Miss SLISSY for the first time*) Oh, Miss Slissy, how do you do? Isn't it a heavenly day? (*Offers Miss SLISSY a rose*) Wouldn't you like a posy to wear?

MISS SLISSY. (*Accepts the flower*) Yes, thank you. I always think a flower brings out your complexion, that is if you have any complexion to bring out, and I always did have considerable, if I do say so myself. (*Pulls off a rose-leaf, and rubs it surreptitiously against her cheek*)

MARY ANNE. (*Lays part of the flowers on the table, and arranges the remainder in a vase on the*

10 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

mantelpiece) Dear Aunt Rhoda! I can't realize that in just a little while she'll be in this very room!

MRS. SIMMONS. Nor me!

MISS SLISSY. (*To* MRS. SIMMONS) Well, goodness knows I should think you could, after all the fussin' round you've been doin'.

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Wipes her forehead with a corner of her apron*) Well, I will say I am about ready to dissolve.

MISS SLISSY. You're lookin' fair to middlin', Mary Anne, though I can't say that dress you're wearin' is real becomin' to you. That's one thing about that Elaine Jewett that was at Cross Roads Inn last summer—she never wore anything that wasn't becomin'. You remember her, don't you, Mary Anne?

MARY ANNE. Of course. We often met on the road and galloped along side by side. Why?

MISS SLISSY. Nothin' 'cept she and her folks are down here for the summer again, only not at the Inn this time.

MARY ANNE. Oh, then perhaps we'll ride together again! (*Holds up a rose with an admiring gesture*) Isn't that rose just perfect?

MISS SLISSY. (*Slyly malicious*) The Jewetts are occupyin' the Barkeley cottage, the whole kit and boodle of 'em. Young Barkeley brought them from the city in his automobile.

(MARY ANNE, *startled drops some flowers on the floor.*)

MARY ANNE. Y-young Barkeley?

MISS SLISSY. Yes, and they do say he's plum crazy about Elaine. Mebbe you've heard it.

MARY ANNE. N-no, I haven't.

MISS SLISSY. Well, it's so. I saw 'em out together yesterday, and just one look at 'em tells the whole story. I don't believe in folks actin' so

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 11

spoonny in public. Talk about a moonstruck couple! Let's see, how long is it since the Barkeleys quit spendin' their summers here?

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Showing that she resents Miss SLISSY's inquisitiveness*) It's been more'n three years, Sairy Applegate Slissy, but neither me nor Marry Anne is carin' to have you talk about it.

MARY ANNE. (*Proudly*) Miss Slissy can talk about it all she likes as far as I am concerned, mother. Why shouldn't she?

MISS SLISSY. Why, Mrs. Simmons, you surprise me! You ain't got nothin' in your mind against Bill Barkeley, have you?

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Her voice trembling*) Nothin' except——

MARY ANNE. (*Warningly*) Mother!

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Impulse overcoming her*) Except I don't think he's as honorable as some young men I've known. There, I will say that much, Mary Anne, even if I do know Miss Slissy'll be sure to repeat it.

MISS SLISSY. (*With air of injured innocence*) Repeat it? The idea of such a thing! Not honorable, eh? Well, that'll interest some folks I know.

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Dusting furiously*) Oh, I'd like to get rid of this dust, and some other things I could mention!

MISS SLISSY. Dear me, Mrs. Simmons, I think you ought to see a doctor. You ain't a bit like yourself to-day. Let me think! Last time I remember seein' Bill, as they all call him, was that barn dance he gave that first year he was in college. Why, dear me, Mary Anne, wasn't it you he danced with all evenin' while the other girls set round so jealous they almost had a fit? Of course it was. You was dressed in blue with blue ribbons, and folks all talkin' about you and him, some even said you was engaged, it seems to me. (*Maliciously*) But if he

12 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

hain't been back to see you since—(*Pauses inquiringly*)

MARY ANNE. (*With dignity*) Well, he hasn't Miss Slissy.

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Plainly agitated again*) That's nothin' against Mary Anne if he hain't.

MISS SLISSY. Of course not! I don't mean any offense. Rich young college fellows are apt to trifle with country girls that don't know no better. You oughtn't to have expected him to be serious, Mary Anne, even if you be the best cake baker anywhere around here. Such things don't count with a man. No, it's just frills and furbelows and nothin' else. That Miss Jewett's an elegant dresser. She's engaged me to do some sewin' for her right away beginnin' to-morrow. Shouldn't be surprised if it was weddin' finery. (*MARY ANNE, during MISS SLISSY's speech, has picked up the flowers left on table, and she absent mindedly sticks a rose in the top of the lamp-shade*) I didn't know it was the style to put flowers in the lamp-shade.

MARY ANNE. (*Embarrassed*) I—I didn't notice what I was doing. (*Hastily removes the rose*)

MISS SLISSY. Seems to me you're lookin' sort of droopy, now that I come to notice it.

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Defiantly*) No one else says so.

MISS SLISSY. (*Ignoring the interruption*) Get yourself a beau, that's my advice. Ain't nothin' like a beau to chirk a girl up, though of course gettin' one is easier said than done, and after you get 'em, sometimes it's hard work to keep 'em.

MRS. SIMMONS. Thank you for takin' such an interest.

MISS SLISSY. Oh, I'm always interested. I think kind hearted folks most generally are. Well, guess I'll be goin'. (*Rises*) I'll travel on down the road now to collect what the widow Stevens owes me. Just because she's out of work, and her youngest is

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 13

down sick, is no excuse for keepin' me waitin'. Let them wait that is more able to afford it, say I. In a day or two, I'll call around to visit your sister, Mis' Simmons.

MRS. SIMMONS. Don't interrupt your sewin' to do it, Sairy Applegate Slissy. If it's a weddin', it may take all your time and I'd rather you wouldn't.

MARY ANNE. Mother!

MISS SLISSY. If it wasn't that your Ma is run down and nervous I'd be certain she was takin' it to heart, Bill Barkeley's throwin' you over!

MRS. SIMMONS. Well, let me tell you this, Miss Slissy. If any man on earth think's he's too good for Mary Anne——

MARY ANNE. (*Desperately*) Mother, if you PLEASE!

MRS. SIMMONS. Excuse me, Mary Anne, I'm goin' to see if there ain't some of our vegetables that need pullin' up by the roots. I'd like the exercise. Good afternoon, Sairy Applegate. (*Exit c., hastily*)

MISS SLISSY. (*Shakes her head, dolefully*) Danger of nervous prostration when they get like that. (*Confidentially*) If it is Miss Jewett's weddin' duds, I'll let you know, Mary Anne, on the Q. T. I'll let you look at 'em.

MARY ANNE. I don't care to do things on the Q. T., Miss Slissy, thank you.

MISS SLISSY. Well, you and your Ma needn't act so high and mighty even if you have got a rich aunt a comin' to visit you. Good afternoon.

MARY ANNE. Good afternoon. (*MISS SLISSY sails out c., holding her head very high. MARY ANNE stands very still, some flowers drooping from her hands. Slowly she sinks down by the table, and bows her head on her arms*)

(*Enter BETSY from L. She has a pair of new boots in her hands. She places them carefully on the*

14 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

mantelshelf, and stands a displaced picture of MARY ANNE against them. Then she crosses to door L, and stands staring curiously at her young mistress.)

BETSY. You ain't sick, be you, Miss Mary Anne?

MARY ANNE. (*Looks up with a start, and tries to smile*) Oh, no, just sort of tired, I guess.

BETSY. Do you want me to pick those Sweet Peas you was speakin' of?

MARY ANNE. Yes, and I'll help you. They're so small it takes a lot of them to make any showing, and I want Aunt Rhoda's room filled with them.

BETSY. (*As she follows MARY off L.*) I can ask the hired man to help too, if you want me to.

(After a short pause, ELAINE appears in door C. which has been left open. She reaches in and knocks on the door, looks around, then knocks again. Walks into the room and to door L. Knocks, opens it and peeps out, shuts door and returns to door C. to summon some one outside. She is attired in modish summer afternoon gown, with parasol, shoes and hat in the very latest style.)

ELAINE. (*Steps just outside door and calls off R.*) Trella, Trella! Come here, dear! (*Waits, twirling her parasol. TRELLA appears, and ELAINE, putting an arm about her, brings her into the room*) That hill was quite steep, wasn't it?

TRELLA. (*Showing exhaustion*) It was almost too much for me. Where is everyone?

ELAINE. (*Places TRELLA in chair, and begins to fan her with a palm leaf fan she has found on the table*) I couldn't get any answer to my knock. There seems to be no one around. But they're just farmer folk and won't think anything of our walking right in.

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 15

TRELLA. Oh, why should I feel so ridiculously worn out?

ELAINE. When the doctor ordered a long tramp for you every day, I don't think he realized how weak you were.

TRELLA. Weak? I'm just a wisp of a girl. I should think you'd get tired of having such a no-account sister around.

ELAINE. (*Stoops impulsively and kisses her*) You're everything in the world that I care for, and you know it.

TRELLA. (*Smiling*) Don't forget a certain young man from Yale.

(ELAINE *with a careless shrug of the shoulders, drops into a chair.*)

ELAINE. Oh, I like Bill Barkeley well enough, but I don't really care for him!

TRELLA. You act as if you cared.

ELAINE. Acting is a part of the game when one wants to land a matrimonial prize. No one suspects the fearful struggle we girls have to keep up appearances these days. I've got to marry money whether there's any love in it or not.

TRELLA. If I believed you were half as hard and worldly as you try to pretend you are, I think it would break my heart. I've always looked on my sister as the noblest girl alive!

ELAINE. I'm the most *selfish* girl alive.

TRELLA. No, no, look how good you are to me!

ELAINE. That's just selfishness too. I'm good to you because I want to keep you alive for my own special pleasure. I believe in selfishness. It's the only thing that pays. Selfish people are the ones that arrive in the long run. Don't preach anything else to me. Look at you for an example of an unselfish saint upon earth, and what is your reward? Even your health taken away! (TRELLA *gives a*

16 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

depressed little sigh, and ELAINE notices it) But you're going to get better, you really are better than you were. You're feeling all right now, aren't you, dear?

TRELLA. Oh, yes, after I've rested a bit. If I were sure the people wouldn't mind, I think I could almost drop off to sleep.

ELAINE. (*Looks about the room*) I wonder who——(*Stops with a start, then points to a picture on the wall*) Why, there's that quaint picture of Mary Simmons's grandfather! This must be the house they were talking about moving into last summer. Nice little country girl, she is; no style, but nice. Wore such an old-fashioned riding-skirt. Well, now I feel quite comfortable about making ourselves at home until Mr. Barkeley comes.

TRELLA. How will Mr. Barkeley know where to stop his car for us?

ELAINE. I left my scarf out on the hedge. That was the signal agreed upon if you and I decided to rest anywhere along the way before he overtook us.

MARY ANNE. (*Enters door L. Stops in surprise*) Why, Miss Jewet, I didn't know you were here!

ELAINE. I hope you won't think we were very presumptuous in walking in when we found no one about?

MARY ANNE. Of course not.

ELAINE. This is my sister Trella I told you of last summer, the one who isn't very strong, you know.

MARY ANNE. (*Walks forward and shakes hands with TRELLA*) I am glad to know you.

TRELLA. We were out for a tramp, and I grew very tired and——

MARY ANNE. (*Hospitably*) Well, I'm glad you stopped here for a rest! Shan't we go out on the porch? It's cooler. See that wide hammock there? I think you might like to drop down in it for a while.

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 17

TRELLA. Thank you. That does sound attractive to me.

ELAINE. (*As TRELLA starts toward door c.*) Then while you're outside, dear, I'll have a little private talk with Miss Simmons.

TRELLA. (*Pauses in doorway, looking off L.*) Oh, but that hammock looks comfy! (*Outside, exits L.*)

MARY ANNE. (*Surprised*) A private talk with me, Miss Jewett?

ELAINE. Yes. I've been wanting it for ever so long. Dear me! What a lovely color you have! We city owls are such washed-out creatures! Come, let's sit here on the sofa together. (*MARY ANNE sits on sofa beside her*) May I be quite frank with you?

MARY ANNE. Why, yes, of course!

ELAINE. Did you ever happen to meet Mr. William Barkeley?

MARY ANNE. (*Making an effort at self control*) Yes, I knew him quite well several years ago, when they stayed here summers.

ELAINE. Oh, did you? Then I imagine you're just the one to tell me what I want to know. It's something I can't very well quiz Bill about myself, and you may think it a strange question anyhow, but can you tell me if there's anyone around here Mr. Barkeley used to be attentive to in his early college days? His chum, Dick Henderson, hinted as much.

MARY ANNE. (*Rather coldly, but without self betrayal*) Why do you wish to know that, Miss Jewett?

ELAINE. Well, before a girl makes up her mind to accept a man, isn't it natural she should wish to learn all she can about his former affairs?

MARY ANNE. (*In a low voice*) I understand.

ELAINE. Then was there a girl he was fond of?

MARY ANNE. There was a girl who thought he

18 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

was fond of her, but she knows better now, and she hasn't any hold on him, none in the least. There'll never be any scenes or reproaches. I suppose that is what you wanted to feel sure of, isn't it?

ELAINE. (*Smiling brightly*) Exactly. How clever of you to guess! Especially in this God forsaken place where one never meets an eligible man. I'm rather curious about the other girl. Who was she?

MARY ANNE. (*With an attempt at lightness*) Oh, now, you can hardly expect me to betray her confidence like that.

ELAINE. But at least you can tell me what she was like.

MARY ANNE. You'd call her just a little country bumpkin, I suppose. She wore gingham dresses and her hair in pigtails, mostly, when he knew her, and believed every kind word that was said to her as though it were gospel, especially when it came from him.

ELAINE. The poor little innocent! Pigtails and gingham, eh? (*Turns toward MARY ANNE*) I can almost see her before me now. Ha, ha, ha! Well, Bill Barkeley has certainly changed since those days. Why, since he's graduated from Yale and entered that law firm in the city, he never takes out any but the most stunningly gowned girls in our set. He was very exclusive at college too. He's ultra swell, in fact, belongs to the best clubs, is a star athlete, and the girl who gets him for a dancing partner has all the others jealous. By the way, what became of the grotesque little bumpkin you've described? I suppose she wound up by marrying some farm-hand in overalls and a flannel shirt.

MARY ANNE. I suppose that is what she should have done, but she didn't. She just kept on loving her former sweetheart like a little fool, and hoping that perhaps some day, somewhere—— (*Pauses, almost overcome by emotion, then continues more*

calmly) but she's through with hoping now. Life has become quite a jog trot affair with her. She doesn't laugh quite as much as she did in the pigtail days perhaps, but outside of that, you wouldn't notice the change in her.

ELAINE. Of course she did not like to lose him. A fellow with such loads of money isn't picked up every day even by a city girl, I can assure you.

MARY ANNE. (*Indignantly*) She never thought of his money, not once. If he hadn't had a penny it would have been all the same to her. (*More quietly*) There, I'm getting quite worked up about it, am I not? But, you see, the girl was a sort of friend of mine.

ELAINE. (*Eyeing her a bit suspiciously*) Indeed?

MARY ANNE. Shan't I get you and your sister some lemonade?

ELAINE. Thank you, but there'll hardly be time, I think. We're expecting Mr. Barkeley to pick us up in his automobile any minute now.

MARY ANNE. (*Panic stricken*) He—he's coming here?

ELAINE. Yes. You don't object, I hope?

MARY ANNE. (*Flustrated*) Yes—no—that is—(*Turns away, distressed*)

ELAINE. I shouldn't think you would. You country girls have so few opportunities to meet smashing chaps like him.

MARY ANNE. (*Rather bitterly*) That's true, we don't have many, and the men we do meet we don't always understand. But—I shan't stay to see him. We're expecting my aunt, and I haven't finished picking the flowers I want for her room. (*Rises*) You'll excuse me, I know.

ELAINE. Of course, though it looks quite as if you were running away from Mr. Barkeley.

MARY ANNE. (*Puts on sun-bonnet*) Of course I don't want to seem rude. If he should ask to see

20 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

me, you can call down to the garden and I'll come. But I—I'm not dressed for company, and I want you to promise you won't call me unless he asks you to.

ELAINE. I'm willing to promise that, of course, though you look very charming in that sun-bonnet—really.

MARY ANNE. Then good-bye, if I don't see you again, but please don't go until Betsy brings you in some lemonade. There's a big fresh pitcherful in the ice-box. I'll remind her.

ELAINE. Thank you. (MARY ANNE *exits* L. ELAINE *goes to door c. Steps outside and looks toward L. Calls softly*) Trella! Trella! (*Speaks to herself as she re-enters c.*) Asleep. Good! (*Comes before a looking-glass. Produces powder-puff from hand-bag, and powders her face, then carefully arranges her hair*)

(*Enter BETSY L. bringing on tray containing pitcher of lemonade and glasses.*)

BETSY. (*Sets tray down on table*) Here's your lemonade, Miss, just the way he likes it.

ELAINE. He? Who?

BETSY. The hired man.

ELAINE. (*As BETSY pours out a glassful for her*) How refreshing that looks! (*Takes a sip*) And tastes! (*The honk of an approaching automobile is heard*) There, I think he's coming!

BETSY. No'm, he ain't. He's down in the pasture lot.

ELAINE. What "he" are you talking about?

BETSY. The hired man.

ELAINE. I wasn't referring to any hired man. I haven't the honor of one's acquaintance.

BETSY. Would you like an introduction?

ELAINE. Heavens, no!

BETSY. He wouldn't either. He's just as bash-

ful as you are. Miss Mary Anne said to ask you if there was anything more I could do.

ELAINE. Miss Mary Anne is very kind, but there's nothing, I believe.

BETSY. (*Slowly*) I think I smell somethin' burin'. (*Sniffs*) I'm sure I do. It's that cake I'm bakin' for company. (*Turns and crosses leisurely to L. drawing her words*) Now isn't that too bad after all my work? (*Exits L.*)

BARKELEY. (*Comes to door, wears automobile attire including cap and goggles*) Hah! So here we are!

ELAINE (*Brightly*) I thought my little signal would flag you all right. Come in.

BARKELEY. (*Removes goggles, and enters*) Saw it a mile off! Where's everybody? Where's your sister?

ELAINE. "Everybody" I can't vouch for, but my sister is dozing off for a minute outside in a hammock. (*Pours a glass of lemonade for BARKELEY, and hands it to him*)

BARKELEY. Just in time for my share, eh? The Barkeley luck in full operation! (*Drinks*) Whose house is this, may I ask?

ELAINE. Don't you recognize it?

BARKELEY. Never was inside it before, but come to think of it, the furniture does look natural, and the pictures—(*Indicates the one of MARY ANNE's grandfather*) especially that one. Mary Anne Simmons doesn't live here, does she?

ELAINE. She does, and was here just a few minutes before you came.

BARKELEY. (*Plainly interested*) A few moments—before I came?

ELAINE. You look stunned!

BARKELEY. I feel stunned. I hadn't heard a word about their moving. I expected to find her living in the old house close to the brook. I in-

tended going there to-morrow. Did you tell her I was to call for you?

ELAINE. I believe so—yes, I did. I remember now, because she repeated it after me.

BARKELEY. She did? By jove, it will seem strange to meet the little girl once more!

ELAINE. Oh, you expect to see her?

BARKELEY. Why, naturally, of course. Doesn't she want to see me?

ELAINE. (*Laughingly*) She didn't act as if she did. When she heard you were coming she seemed in a fearful hurry to get away. Maybe it was on account of the way she was dressed. I don't want to make fun of the poor little thing, but that sun-bonnet—well, it was simply indescribable! Ha, ha!

BARKELEY. (*Unheeding the ridicule*) She used to be so pretty—eyes like violets.

ELAINE. If you want to see the violets again, I think I can tell you which way she went, sun-bonnet and all.

BARKELEY. No, not when she took pains to run away when you spoke of me. I'll call on her some other day.

ELAINE. (*Nods in agreement*) And I suppose Papa will be wondering what has become of Trella and me. We really must be going on.

BARKELEY. (*Meditatively*) Hearing her name again and all—it's like coming back into another life!

ELAINE. (*Rather sarcastically*) Indeed?

BARKELEY. Mary Anne and I used to have some awfully good times trotting around together. I can't understand her running away from me.

ELAINE. (*Ill naturedly, but with pretense of kindness*) Why not wait around, then, until she comes in? Send Trella and me home in the automobile, and have it return for you later. The girl is really very nice in her absurd little country way.

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 23

(*Points to mantelpiece*) Look at the parlor ornaments!

BARKELEY. (*Surprised*) Boots!

ELAINE. In the middle of the mantelpiece. How unique!

BARKELEY. But what on earth is the object?

ELAINE. (*Picks up MARY ANNE'S picture and exhibits it, then sets it back against boots*) This is her picture leaning against them. Of course the picture explains it.

BARKELEY. Explains what?

ELAINE. That those boots in such a place mean the freak of a sentimental little girl in love with the owner. She places herself at his feet, as it were. Ha, ha!

BARKELEY. Nonsense! Mary Anne would never do anything as ridiculous as that!

ELAINE. My dear boy, if you had once seen that sun-bonnet, you wouldn't put anything beyond it. Besides, now that I come to think of it, I have heard she was in love with some country clod-hopper or other. I'm not sure that it wasn't the hired man.

BARKELEY. (*Shortly*) Indeed? Well, I'm ready to go if you are.

ELAINE. Without meeting Mary Anne?

BARKELEY. I don't want to see her again if I can help it.

ELAINE. (*Pretending remorse*) Oh, I'm awfully sorry if I've said anything I shouldn't! I didn't dream you'd ever liked her particularly.

BARKELEY. Well, I did. Of course we were both kids when it happened, especially Mary Anne, but—well it was really a sort of love affair, until I got back to college and Dad put a stop to it. He said he didn't care who I married, but he did ask that I would wait long enough to know my own mind. He put me on my honor to cut all love affairs until after I graduated. That was in my

24 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

Freshman year, so naturally the girl and I drifted apart. I didn't realize until just now how much I'd looked forward to seeing her again, but—boots! That settles it. (*Goes toward door c.*) Well I have a little tinkering to do at the car, and I'll wait under that tree across the road for you and your sister. (*Looks toward mantelpiece and sighs*) Boots! (*Exits c. and swings off toward R.*)

(TRELLA comes in front of door from L., looks off after him.)

TRELLA. (*Enters*) Why, what ails Mr. Barkeley? I was right at his elbow and he didn't see me.

ELAINE. Don't ask me what ails him, Trella, or you'll put me in a temper. Forgive me, dear, I didn't mean to be impatient with you. Have some lemonade before we start. (*Pours TRELLA a glass of lemonade*) Oh, why can't you get some color into those pale cheeks?

TRELLA. Are they so pale? Out there just now I saw a little white flower blooming in the shadow of a big rock, faded and fragile for want of sunshine. It made me think, somehow, of my illness as a great rock too, standing between me and the sun. (*Holds ELAINE's hand caressingly against her cheek*) But maybe some day a good fairy will come along and push the rock away, then how I'll bloom and bloom! You'll see.

ELAINE. My precious little sister! I don't deserve such an angel as you are in my life. Perhaps that is why I have you. It's mostly the undeserving that draw the prizes, I've noticed. (*The honk of an automobile is heard*) There, that's for us! Come, dear.

TRELLA. (*Rises*) I had the strangest dream while I was dozing off out there. I saw you having your wedding things made to marry Bill Barkeley.

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 25

ELAINE. That's rather a bad sign I believe. Besides it's premature, sister mine. He hasn't yet done me the honor to propose, and in the last few minutes I have begun to doubt—(*Honk is repeated*) What man *ever* had the patience to wait when he himself was ready to start? Come! (ELAINE and TRELLA *exit* C.)

(BETSY *peeps in from door L., then speaks back.*)

BETSY. Yes'm, they're gone. (*She enters, followed by MRS. SIMMONS. MRS. SIMMONS has put on her "company" dress, and looks very spick and span*)

MRS. SIMMONS. I ain't objectin' to company, except when it's the company you aint looking for, then it's upsettin'. Mary Anne said I didn't need to come in and speak to 'em, seein' as I was in a hurry to get dressed. Straighten them chairs around, Betsy. I wonder why Rhoda don't come.

BETSY. (*Slowly pulls a chair across the floor*) Maybe the train's late.

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Half to herself*) Strange that the Jewett girl should turn up here right after what Miss Slissy told us about her!

BETSY. What did Miss Slissy tell you?

MRS. SIMMONS. I wasn't talkin' to you, Betsy, I was talkin' to myself. As for askin' what Miss Slissy says, there ain't much that she don't say sooner or later, especially if it's somethin' she don't know anything about. (*Suddenly catches sight of the pair of new boots on the mantelpiece*) For the land sakes! What on earth are them boots doin' there?

BETSY. (*Starting to defend her action*) Why, you told me——

MRS. SIMMONS. I didn't do nothin' of the sort—yes, I did too, but of course without meanin' it.

26 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

Just suppose my sister from New York should have got in before I noticed 'em!

BETSY. You told me——

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Raises a boot as if to fling it at BETSY, and frightens her into silence*) Don't keep on sayin' what I told you. You aint got no more sense of humor than a turkey gobbler a gobblin' when he sees the axe a comin'. Take 'em on out of here, and tell the hired man that if he turns out as foolish as you be, he gets his walkin' papers and gets 'em quick.

BETSY. What's walkin' papers?

MRS. SIMMONS. Pretty soon you'll get yours, if you don't watch out, and then you'll know.

BETSY. (*Holding out the boots and looking at them*) He'll be glad to get these again. He didn't want to take 'em off at first, but I told him he must because you wanted 'em in the parlor. (*Starts toward exit L.*)

MRS. SIMMONS. Come back here, and take away these. (*Indicates pitcher and glasses*)

BETSY. Ye-es'm. (*Picks up tray with pitcher and glasses, and drops a boot. Starts to pick up boot, and drops the other one. Sets down tray, and puts both boots under one arm. Picks up the tray, and drops both boots at once. Finally gets under way, and exits with all the articles*)

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Has taken her stand by the window, and turns to speak as MARY enters*) Well, I'm glad you got your dress changed. Wonder if your aunt could be comin' by automobile instead of the train. I heard one honkin' up the road, I thought.

MARY ANNE. (*She wears a pretty but simple white dress*) I'll run down to the gate and see. (*Starts for door C. Meets MRS. HENRY TATE KIRKLAND entering. MRS. KIRKLAND wears motor-coat, bonnet and veil and presents an up-to-date ap-*

pearance) Oh, you dear aunt Rhoda! (*Flies to embrace her*)

MRS. SIMMONS. Why, you stole a march on us!

(*At C. MRS. KIRKLAND'S maid enters, carrying a suit case, umbrella etc., and stands awaiting orders from her mistress.*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Still holding MARY ANNE in her arms, kisses MRS. SIMMONS, then begins to smooth her niece's hair*) Just the same Sweet Mary girl as ever, only sweeter!

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Smilingly*) Beginninn' to spoil her before you're in the house two seconds! (*Starts for door L.*) Though she is the best girl in the world, I ain't denyin'. (*Calls*) Betsy!

BETSY. (*Off L.*) Ye-es'm!

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Puts MARY ANNE away from her at arm's length, and scrutinizes her anxiously*) Amanda, what ails our Mary Anne? She doesn't look like her bright self at all.

MRS. SIMMONS. Mebbe she's been studyin' too hard. Take off your things, Rhoda. (*Enter BETSY L.*) Betsy, help sister off with that coat. (*BETSY does so*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*To BETSY*) Then you and Felice go out and help James bring in that small trunk, three bags, my other maid, two dogs and the golf-sticks. Take them all around the back way. I'm sick of lugging the machinery of civilized existence along with me everywhere I go, and intend to see just as little of them as possible while I am here. (*FELICE sets down belongings, and exits after BETSY C. and off R.*) I came down to Farmdale for a rest, and to go buggy riding with Mary Anne. (*Smiles toward MARY, who remains rather serious*) Whatever is troubling you, child? Now you needn't say it is nothing, for I felt it the moment I came into the room.

MARY ANNE. I am feeling just a little downcast over—something, but I didn't mean to show it.

MRS. SIMMONS. I think that Jewett girl a callin' here is what upset you.

MRS. KIRKLAND. Why, was that Elaine Jewett I saw in the Barkeley gray machine? Her veil was flying so I couldn't quite make out.

MRS. SIMMONS. Yes, it was, and as for young Barkeley himself——

MARY ANNE. (*Interrupts, imploringly*) Mumsy, dear! Please don't talk any more about him. Oh, why did you tell Miss Slissy you didn't consider him honorable, when you know she's the worst gossip in the town? She'll repeat that everywhere, and people will begin to suspect we were engaged, and to question me about it, and I didn't want anyone to know.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Much surprised*) You were engaged to young Barkeley, and never wrote to inform me? Why not, Mary Anne?

MARY ANNE. Oh, we made a sort of childish compact to keep it secret—I don't know why.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Gratified*) The Barkeleys of New York stand very well indeed, socially. The young man is considered a great catch. I've seen him at a number of debutante dances. I wondered what he was doing in this village. So he's here on your account, is he?

MARY ANNE. Indeed no, Auntie. He's forgotten all about me, but I didn't care to have everybody find it out. I've a little pride left.

MRS. SIMMONS. I reckon he thought Mary didn't have enough style for him, and was beneath him.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Fairly bristling with indignation*) You don't mean to tell me, Amanda, that any young man has had the effrontery to jilt my niece?

MARY ANNE. (*With a tinge of bitterness*) You mustn't forget, Aunt Rhode, that he is Mr. William Barkeley of New York and Newport.

MRS. KIRKLAND. Neither do I forget that I am Mrs. Henry Tate Kirkland of New York and Lenox, and that you are my niece.

MARY ANNE. Perhaps it was natural that he should grow tired of me.

MRS. KIRKLAND. I don't permit people to grow tired of my niece.

MARY ANNE. But you see I never said anything to him about my aristocratic relatives in New York. I didn't dream then that family or dress could make a difference with a man, if he really loved a girl, but I can see now how it might. When I think of Elaine Jewett's appearance and contrast it with my own, I realize how hopelessly countrified I am. He likes fashionably dressed girls; she said so, the kind he meets at dances and proms. Look at me, with my brown face and arms and country-made dresses, while Miss Jewett has Paris hats and gowns, and beautiful shoes, and exquisite laces, and does herself up in powders and rouge and perfume! What chances has plain little me against all that sort of thing?

MRS. SIMMONS. Anyhow, she ain't as smart as you are. Professor Saunders says when you get started, there ain't a finer conversationist in Farmdale.

MARY ANNE. When I get started—that's just it. But when it's anybody that counts, I'm so shy I grow dumb as an oyster. Elaine Jewett, I've heard, can keep a dozen admirers entertained at once.

MRS. KIRKLAND. I know the Jewett family like a book, my dear. George Jewett was an old beau of mine. They all have the gift of the gab, but George was always money mad, and the oldest girl is just like him. I might have suspected that she was making up to Willy Barkeley.

MARY ANNE. (*Continuing with increased agitation*) Mary Anne! Mary Anne! I suppose he thinks even the name is out of date and ridiculous,

while Elaine is beautiful and poetic. I had the idea that if I read and studied and kept up with him mentally all I could, perhaps I could hold him, that that was the important thing to do, but it wasn't. I know it wasn't, since I've seen her. I'm homely, and dowdy, and lonesome—(*Chokes emotionally, and turns away*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. My dear, the reason you imagine you care for Willy Barkeley is because you've never seen anyone else.

MARY ANNE. No, no, it isn't that. I cared for Bill because—because—(*Hesitates*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. Well?

MARY ANNE. Well, just because he was Bill!

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Dryly*) Dear me, I'm afraid it's a bad case! And to think I've just been globe-trotting around, all wrapped up in my own selfish pleasures, and never dreaming what was going on here!

MARY ANNE. But, Auntie, even if you had known, you couldn't have helped me any, nobody could.

MRS. KIRKLAND. If you've had your heart broken by that young cub since I've been away, I'm going to make it my business to see that the break is mended. There's no reason why you couldn't win him back again, if you want him.

MARY ANNE. (*Passionately*) I don't, I don't, with his heart belonging to some one else! He's hers, hers, all hers!

MR. KIRKLAND. How do you know he is?

MARY ANNE. From the things she told me; the questions she asked.

MRS. KIRKLAND. She's not engaged to him.

MARY ANNE. How do you know she isn't?

MRS. KIRKLAND. Because the Jewetts are so ambitious socially that if Elaine had pulled off an engagement to Willy Barkeley, nothing could prevent her from megaphoning it to the whole wide

world. What did the young man say when he wrote to break off with you?

MARY ANNE. He never wrote breaking it off. He left that to me to spare my pride, I suppose, but somehow I could never summon up courage enough to write and tell him all was over between us. I was afraid it was all over when he didn't come back that vacation after his freshman year, yet I kept hoping against hope somehow, that some day he'd seek me out after all, and care for me just the same. But when he did come back at last—to-day—after these months and years of waiting, it was only in the trail of another girl. I don't suppose he meant to be cruel, but all along to keep sending me college notices of dances and concerts, when he didn't think enough of me to write me, was as though I were a little mouse which he wanted to drown, but didn't quite have the courage to do so, so he only half drowned me instead. But I'm drowned now, all right. It's been slow, but I'm drowned, I'm drowned! (*Bows her head on her arms, and begins to sob*)

(MRS. KIRKLAND and MRS. SIMMONS look at each other, then at MARY ANNE, and dry their eyes in sympathy.)

MRS. KIRKLAND. Don't cry, dear. No man's worth it. (*Sniffs loudly, and uses handkerchief*)

BETSY. (*Appears in door L.*) That foreign French girl wants to know——

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Interrupts her*) Well, you tell her and all of them, including the dogs and golf-sticks, not to unpack anything, because I'm going away from here the first thing in the morning.

MARY ANNE. (*Protestingly*) Aunt Rhoda!

BETSY. (*Laboriously*) You mean that you want me to tell her that you are going to go away from here before you really got here, is that it?

32 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

MRS. KIRKLAND. Approximately, yes.

BETSY. (*Turns to Mrs. SIMMONS*) Any orders for the hired man?

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Irritably*) Yes, tell him that I give him two weeks' notice.

BETSY. (*First aghast, then defiant*) I'm afraid I can't find him. (*Exits L.*)

MARY ANNE. (*To Mrs. KIRKLAND*) Surely you're not going to let my little trouble drive you away. I promise to brace up and be cheerful after this. Mother, make her stay.

MRS. SIMMONS. I'll kill the best chicken on the farm for your dinner to-morrow, Rhoda, and we'll have old fashioned apple-dumplings.

MRS. KIRKLAND. I'm not hearing a word either of you are saying. I'm too busy with my own thoughts. Mary Anne, run up to your room and pack every stitch you possess ready to start off with me to Narragansett Pier to-morrow, on the early morning train.

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Amazed*) What are you talking about, Rhoda?

MARY ANNE. But Auntie I have no suitable clothes for such a place!

MRS. KIRKLAND. They'll do until we find some others that are. What a hardened old sinner I've been! Here I am without a chick or child in the world, and more money than is good for me, and I've let time drift by, thinking that some day I'd give you your chance when I got around to it, and forgetting that there's never a better time to do the things we should do than right now.

MRS. SIMMONS. But your nerves, sister? You said you were all run down, and needed rest.

MRS. KIRKLAND. I was mistaken. It isn't rest I need, it's excitement.

MARY ANNE. What do you mean, Auntie?

MRS. SIMMONS. What sort of excitement?

MRS. KIRKLAND. The excitement of backing our

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 33

Mary Anne against Elaine Jewett, and seeing which one will come out ahead.

MARY ANNE. (*Amazed*) Why, Aunt Rhoda!

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*With determination*) Yes, Mary Anne!

MARY ANNE. (*Delightedly*) Oh!

(*Rushes into MRS. KIRKLAND'S arms. MRS. SIMMONS smiles with sympathetic delight.*)

ACT II.

TIME:—*Winter of the following year.*

SCENE:—*Sitting-room in MRS. HENRY TATE KIRKLAND'S New York home. Doors R. and L. Windows at R. Long sofa up C. Arm-chair at R. near small stand. Small desk at L. Chairs and other furnishings ad lib. Four fancy band-boxes are stacked up on the sofa.*

DISCOVERED:—MRS. KIRKLAND'S maid ushering in MISS SLISSY at L.

MISS SLISSY. (*Takes a card from her hand-bag, and gives it to the maid*) When Mrs. Kirkland gets through seein' who it is, you can bring that card back to me if she ain't noticin'.

(MAID, *repressing a smile, bows and exits.* MISS SLISSY, *after much arranging of attire, takes a seat. She looks about with undisguised curiosity, and is especially interested in the band-boxes. Yielding to temptation, she runs over and lifts the lid of one of the boxes, and, after a hasty peep, runs back to her seat in the fear of being detected. Plucks up courage, and re-*

34 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

turns to look into the second and third boxes. Has just lifted lid of fourth box, when MRS. KIRKLAND enters L. and catches her at it.)

MISS SLISSY. (*Clears her throat, and tries to assume a careless manner*) Pretty coverin's to these boxes.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Looks at MISS SLISSY through her lorgnette, then at the visiting-card in her hand, then back to MISS SLISSY*) Miss Sarah Applegate Slissy, I believe?

MISS SLISSY. (*Gushingly*) Yes, Mrs. Kirkland. How do you do?

MRS. KIRKLAND. You came with the hats I ordered?

MISS SLISSY. No, I was just lookin' at 'em on my way to the winder. I'm from Farmdale, the dress-maker there. I reckon you've heard your sister speak of me. She'd ought to mention me very favorable after all the fuss I had turnin' her old black dress, and though I do say it as shouldn't, I never was paid half for that dress what I deserved to be.

MRS. KIRKLAND. I presume my sister paid you all you asked.

MISS SLISSY. Well yes. I always was too easy goin' for my own good. And she might have added a little present. Do you mind tellin' me if them beads are real or imitation you're a wearin'?

MRS. KIRKLAND. All my jewelry is real.

MISS SLISSY. Well, there's no question but that the least deservin' in this world sometimes gets the most. Would you mind givin' that card back to me?

MRS. KIRKLAND. What?

MISS SLISSY. Visitin' cards, especially when you have the town barber print 'em by hand like I did—look at them flourishes—is expensive.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Returns card*) There it is, Miss Slissy, I hope you'll find it uninjured.

MISS SLISSY. Well, there's a little crack across the corner, but I hope no one will notice it, maybe. (*Points to a picture on the wall*) Would you mind tellin' me if you bought that picture at one of them boardin'-house auction sales? I was readin' in the newspaper the other day a good many people furnished their houses that way.

MRS. KIRKLAND. I never attended an auction sale in my life. Err—was your visit here for anything especial?

MISS SLISSY. Well, I thought I might as well take a squint at the city styles and find out some of the news, so long as there was an excursion up from Farmdale half fare. Is Mary Anne to home?

MRS. KIRKLAND. She is, but very busy.

MISS SLISSY. Helpin' in the kitchen, eh? Well, I suspected it! As I was tellin' Miss Brown yesterday, rich folks expects their poor relation to pay for their keep some way or other every time, and Mary Anne must be pretty good help now—bein' with you 'bout a year.

MRS. KIRKLAND. My niece is not needed in the kitchen.

MISS SLISSY. She's chambermaid, then, I'll bet a doughnut?

MRS. KIRKLAND. Since you insist upon details, I will tell you that Mary Anne is kept busy with her studies and social duties. She's taking a French lesson just now. Later she has her dancing lesson. Later she goes into the hands of a hair-dresser and manicure. Then we take in an afternoon tea, with dinner at the Biltmore, and the opera to follow.

MISS SLISSY. For the land sakes! And she used to be teacher in the Sunday School! Well, you tell her for me she'd better forsake such frivolities an' come home right away, her Ma ain't well.

MRS. KIRKLAND. I think you're mistaken about that. I had a letter from my sister this morning saying she never felt better in her life.

36 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

MISS SLISSY. Well, all I know is that when I was sayin' to her yesterday that I didn't s'pose Mary Anne would ever be the same girl she was before Bill Barkeley jilted her, she answered me so snappy I could just see her nerves was givin' way. Anyhow, Mary Anne hain't no business stayin' up here with things goin' on the way they are to Farmdale. Why, durin' that storm last week, the rain broke through her poor Ma's roof and spiled the ceilin' of the spare-room, and she's got to have the roof shingled over again.

MRS. KIRKLAND. You think Mary Anne might have spread herself out on the roof and kept the rain from coming through if she'd been home?

MISS SLISSY. Not exactly that, of course, but—well, it's makin' lots of talk. Ain't you goin' to send for Mary Anne?

MRS. KIRKLAND. I'm sorry, but her French lesson is too important to be interrupted.

MISS SLISSY. Well, be sure and tell her from me that the neighbors think it's strange, and me too, that a jilted girl like Mary Anne——

MRS. KIRKLAND. I will certainly tell her neither what you nor the neighbors think. She wouldn't be interested.

MISS SLISSY. Since you take it like that, next time I come to the City I shan't call on you nor Mary Anne either.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*With icy politeness*) Perhaps that would be wiser.

MISS SLISSY. Though maybe it's just your way. Would you mind my lookin' into that last hat-box before I go, seein' I'm here for styles? I saw all the others. (*Makes her way to hat-boxes, and flings off the lid of the fourth one, examining the hat within closely*) I s'pose three of 'em's for you, and one for Mary Anne, maybe?

MRS. KIRKLAND. They're all for Mary Anne.

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 37

MISS SLISSY. Whatever'll she do with four hats at once?

MRS. KIRKLAND. She never wears more than two at the same time.

MISS SLISSY. Do you mean to tell me she wears a couple of hats on her head at once?

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Calmly*) I said she never wore more than two.

MISS SLISSY. (*Disconcerted, and suspecting that MRS. KIRKLAND is making game of her*) Well, I don't understand city folks' ways, nor their talk, either one, and I'm mighty glad I don't live here.

MRS. KIRKLAND. Yes, I think we all have much to be thankful for.

MISS SLISSY. Now that's the first thing you've said that sounds natural and makes me feel at home since I came here. It's just like what our preacher says a visitin' round among his flock. "We all have much to be thankful for," he says. Too much, I should think he'd think. He has ten children now, goin' on eleven. Well, I reckon I've got to start for the station, if I expect to catch that train that gets me to Farmdale before night. Good-bye.

MRS. KIRKLAND. Good-bye. I hope you'll have a pleasant journey home.

MISS SLISSY. Thank you, I hope so. (*Turns in door*) Tell Mary Anne when folks are too busy to see their old neighbors, it's a pretty good sign they're goin' off on their looks and can't bear to have it known. Good-bye. (*Exits L.*)

(MRS. KIRKLAND *replaces the lid on band-box.*

MARY ANNE *peeps in from R., then enters. She is exceedingly well-groomed, and wears a dainty house-gown.*)

MARY ANNE. Oh, Auntie, I came so near walking right in—and then her voice stopped me. Whoever would have dreamed of her coming here?

38 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

She's tormented poor Mama with questions about me ever since I've been away. I'm afraid if I had seen her I'd have said something they'd never print in books on "How to be polite."

MRS. KIRKLAND. I knew what an infliction she'd be to you, dear, otherwise I'd have sent for you. How are the French lessons coming on?

MARY ANNE. (*Laughingly*) Oh, marvelously. I can say "What color is the hat of my father" so well that Monsieur Le Blanc almost understands me.

MRS. KIRKLAND. And your music?

MARY ANNE. Yesterday the Professor suggested a silencer for my piano, so I'm sure I've begun to make an impression.

MRS. KIRKLAND. And the dancing?

MARY ANNE. I trod on the dancing master's toes only six times in that last new step he was teaching me.

MRS. KIRKLAND. You're so modest that you always belittle your own accomplishments, dear, but you won the silver-mounted crop in that contest at the riding academy yesterday.

MARY ANNE. That was no credit to me, Auntie. I've known how to manage a horse ever since I was a little tot so high, and I love it, I love it! Even the conventional canter through the Park with the groom tagging after me so close that he takes all the fascinating danger away. But oh, how I used to love the riding at home, when my mount was a wild, half broken colt with the spirit of youth and recklessness in his blood! That rush down the long level road, the wind blowing in my face, my hair tumbling down my back, my heart keeping time to the rhythm of his leaps—oh it was glorious, glorious! (*With quick change*) Not that I'm not happy here, auntie, and enjoying every new experience! I'll never forget all you've done for the crude, awkward, homely little country girl I was when I came to you.

MRS. KIRKLAND. You may have been a trifle

crude and awkward, but I deny that you were ever homely. Everyone says you resemble me. You were a bit dowdy in your dress, and no wonder, with that brainless Miss Slissy in charge of the dress-making. A few pretty hats and gowns have done away with all that, but you don't make as much of your beautiful hair as I'd like. Stand off there, and let me look at you.

MARY ANNE. (*Suiting the action to the word*) Shall I turn stiffly around like a wax figure with a perpetual smile in a corner show-window?

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Critically*) Hm! We must improve a bit on the hair before I introduce you to my friends next week. They're all wondering why I haven't allowed my mysterious young guest to go out in society since we came back from Washington, but I wanted to make sure you were going to have perfect poise, perfect command of yourself, even when—(*Pauses*)

MARY ANNE. Yes?

MRS. KIRKLAND. Even when we run across young Barkeley somewhere, a thing bound to happen sooner or later.

MARY ANNE. (*On a hassock at the knee of Mrs. Kirkland*) Oh, Auntie, I begin to tremble even at the mention of his name! I've tried so hard to get over caring for him, and maybe when I meet him again I'll know I have gotten over it, but—but—I'm so afraid I haven't! I ought to have more pride I know.

MRS. KIRKLAND. Now don't spoil your pretty eyes with tears, my dear! I'm ready to chaperone you to all the nice places where you're likely to meet the one man in the world that's intended for you, whether he's Willy Barkeley or some one else. If you don't find your happiness somewhere, it won't be my fault.

PATTY. (*Appears in door L.*) Confessing your

40 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

sins, Mary Anne? (MARY and MRS. KIRKLAND rise with pleased exclamations) Look who's here!

MARY ANNE. Why, Patty Cloverleaf, where did you come from?

PATTY. From Washington, on the special parlor-car limited!

MRS. KIRKLAND. But your mother said when I was leaving Washington with Mary Anne, that your family wouldn't follow for at least two months.

PATTY. Mama never knows what we're going to do until I tell her. I run the family, you know.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (Casting her eyes heavenward) The modern girl!

PATTY. Anyhow Washington was lonesome as the catacombs without Marion, and besides, Charlie became fractious.

MARY ANNE. Meaning what?

PATTY. Meaning jealous. Accused me of staying on there just for the fun of making googoo eyes at Washington celebrities. As if I ever did such a thing! At least, he never caught me at it. But there are always such stacks of girls waiting around for the chance to console a jealous man, that I thought I'd better come home and interrupt the proceedings, and I did. The proceedings was his stenographer. He's getting a new one to-day. One not so sympathetic—also older. By the way, Marion, Charlie tells me the fraternity boys are all looking forward to meeting you when they give their dance at Elaine Jewett's next week.

MARY ANNE. Oh, Patty, but why should they?

PATTY. Because your fame as a howling, raving heartbreaker has traveled all the way from Washington.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (Laughingly) Well, I promised to be a patroness, I know, but not to bring anyone with me.

PATTY. My dear Mrs. Kirkland, they'll fairly mob you if you dare leave Marion at home. She's

to be quite the special feather in Elaine Jewett's social cap. Elaine said she had never met Marion, but had sent an urgent invitation for her to accompany you.

MRS. KIRKLAND. So she did.

MARY ANNE. (*Shrinking*) Oh, but Auntie, if it is to be at Elaine Jewett's house——

PATTY. (*As MARY ANNE crosses to window*) But you'll find Miss Jewett very charming, Marion, and besides, you know how I've wanted all of Charlie's Yale friends to meet you. They're all such fine fellows too. There's Mr. Henderson—he has a crooked nose, but a lovely disposition—and Mr. Miller, the famous Football-coach, and that adorable Bill Barkeley—Elaine looks upon him as her special property, by the way, so beware!—and then there's Teddy Farnum! Teddy ! Once seen, never forgotten! And there's Mr. Boyd——

(*A loud crash of glass is heard outside. MRS. KIRKLAND and PATTY start up.*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. Oh, what's that?

PATTY. Sounded like a window-pane struck by a bomb. What was it, Marion? Did you see?

MARY ANNE. (*At window, speaks rather faintly*) Yes, some one's automobile crashed into the lamp-post in front of our door.

(*MRS. KIRKLAND and PATTY hasten to the window as MARY leaves it, staggering slightly as she does so.*)

PATTY. (*Looks from window, speaks back excitedly*) The policeman has picked up a child. She's frightened, but doesn't seem to be hurt. Why, I declare that's my Charlie's car! And there's the creature himself! He's supporting a man across the sidewalk!

42 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

MARY ANNE. The man was thrown out when the automobile struck—I saw him fall.

PATTY. Bill Barkeley, as I'm alive! Oh, maybe Charlie will be arrested for speeding, and Mr. Barkeley too, and locked up in cells until they're bailed out, and all those other horrid things that happen if you get in the hands of the law. And they're such horrid hands. I'm going to run right down and see what's happened. (*Exits L.*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Anxiously, to MARY ANNE*) Why, dearie, you look as if you had seen a ghost!

MARY ANNE. That's just the way I feel. Bill Barkeley—after all these years. He was running that car himself, and turned straight into the sidewalk to keep from hurting a child, risked his own life when he did so. Just the sort of thing he would have done in those old days when I thought him the best and bravest boy on earth. The other man helped him to his feet, but he may be hurt, even so. Oh, if I could only go to him! I *must* go to him— (*Starts toward L. MRS. KIRKLAND restrains her*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. No, dear child, and I wouldn't have him meet you for worlds while you're like this. He'd see at once that you still cared for him. We don't want that to happen, Mary, do we?

MARY ANNE. (*Turns back, ashamed of herself*) No, no, not for worlds, of course. Forgive me, Auntie. But why couldn't he have changed? Why did he have to look just the same, seem just the same as before he went away and forgot me? And oh, Auntie, if he should be really hurt——

MRS. KIRKLAND. Sh! I hear voices in the hall. I believe Patty's having them bring him in!

MARY ANNE. (*Panic stricken, flies to her aunt for protection*) Auntie, oh, Auntie!

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Takes MARY ANNE by both arms and tries to quiet her*) Good gracious, child, don't act like this. Run to your own room and try to calm yourself!

MARY ANNE. You'll tell me how he is? You'll promise to let me know if it's anything serious?

MRS. KIRKLAND. Of course I will, though it's nothing to you, remember that!

MARY ANNE. I do remember that it's nothing to me, of course—nothing, nothing. Oh, Auntie, it's everything! (*Rushes off R.*)

PATTY. (*Heard off L.*) I will help you along, Mr. Barkeley, whether you want me to or not. Now, don't be foolish about it. (*PATTY and CHARLES MASON between them help BARKELEY into the room*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Turning a chair to receive him*) Well, well, Mr. Barkeley, what have you been trying to do?

BARKELEY. (*Wabbly, but plucky*) It's all nonsense, their making such a fuss, Mrs. Kirkland. (*Drops into the waiting chair*) It's just a little crick in my shoulder from landing on it when I hit the pavement.

MASON. You landed on your head too, old scout. I almost heard your brains explode!

PATTY. I suppose that horrid policeman would have followed us right in if they had.

MASON. He wanted to see if we needed him.

PATTY. (*Gets a pillow off sofa*) I'd just as soon need a dentist as need a policeman. They always look to me as if they were just pining to take something to jail. (*Puts pillow behind BARKELEY'S head*) There, how do you feel now?

BARKELEY. Comfortable, thanks, and—absurd. It's a shame to intrude on you like this, Mrs. Kirkland. Charlie, it's a shame.

MRS. KIRKLAND. Nonsense! What are houses for if it isn't to give shelter to our friends when they need it?

MASON. Mrs. Kirkland has spoiled all us boys with so many kindnesses, that she mustn't be sur-

44 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

prised if we take advantage of it sometimes. And it all happened right before her door.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*To BARKELEY*) Wouldn't you like a cup of tea or coffee to steady your nerves, or brandy in hot water?

BARKELEY. No, I'm positively O. K. Really, I am! Best of all, we didn't harm the kid. The little mite was fairly bumping into us before I saw her. I'll never forget her scared look!

PATTY. Marion saw you when you struck.

BARKELEY. Who—saw me?

PATTY. Marion—Mrs. Kirkland's niece. She was looking from the window when it happened.

BARKELEY. Pardon me for asking you to repeat the name. I thought at first you said Mary Anne. I used to know a little girl called Mary Anne.

PATTY. (*Not knowing MARION'S real name*) Country sort of a name.

BARKELEY. She was a country girl.

PATTY. (*Turn to MRS. KIRKLAND*) Where is Marion now, by the way?

MASON. Yes, where is she? I'd like to get ahead of the other fellows by being the first to be introduced.

MRS. KIRKLAND. So sorry to disappoint you, Mr. Mason, but Marion was a bit upset from seeing the accident, and I sent her to her room.

BARKELEY. Please tell her, Mrs. Kirkland, that the accident amounted to nothing, and that there was no occasion for her to distress herself. No one was hurt. Please tell her no one was hurt—(*His head falls back, and he is seen to be unconscious*)

PATTY. (*Alarmed*) Mr. Barkeley! Mr. Barkeley! (*Turns to others*) Oh, what's the matter with him?

MASON. Here, Bill, look up! He's gone a bit woozy from striking on his head. Barkeley, come, get a grip on yourself!

PATTY. We ought to 'phone for a doctor.

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 45

MRS. KIRKLAND. The 'phone is right there in the hall. (*Indicates door L. and starts toward door R. herself*) And I'll get brandy, or smelling salts, or—or something. (*Exits R.*)

PATTY. What doctor shall we call?

MASON. None. He'd never forgive us for making all that fuss over him here. I'll find the butler, and we'll get him down into my car.

PATTY. No, I'll find the butler while you see whether your old automobile will work or not, after trying to remove the sidewalk.

(*They exit together, he declaring the automobile is all right and she expressing doubts of it, etc., making a mixed excited chatter as they disappear off L. Door opens R. and MARY ANNE peeps in. Looks to see that PATTY and MASON are out of sight, then runs softly down to BARKELEY, eyeing him anxiously. She touches his hand very lightly, and then, seeing that he does not move, drops on her knee by the side of the chair, and for a moment rests her cheek against his hand.*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Heard off R.*) I thought I'd never find those smelling salts! (*MARY ANNE starts up and backs away from BARKELEY confusedly. Enter MRS. KIRKLAND R., and stops in amazement on beholding her niece*) Mary Anne!

MARY ANNE. (*Piteously, excusing herself*) I—I couldn't help coming in, when I saw he was alone. Why did they go and leave him all alone?

MRS. KIRKLAND. We decided to 'phone for a doctor, and he was perfectly safe here. (*Looks at BARKELEY—and as she does so he moves his head very slightly*) There, he's coming to!

MARY ANNE. Is he? Oh! (*Dismayed, for fear BARKELEY may catch sight of her, runs from room*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. Do you hear me speaking to you, Mr. Barkeley?

46 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

BARKELEY. (*Dreamily, without opening his eyes*)
The same sweet girl!

MRS. KIRKLAND. What? (*Starts back*)

BARKELEY. The same—(*Opens his eyes, and stares stupidly at MRS. KIRKLAND*) Oh, I thought it was someone else! (*Drops his head back, and closes his eyes.* MRS. KIRKLAND *puts phial of smelling salts under his nose. He sits up, showing distaste for it, speaks chokingly*) What's that—dynamite?

MRS. KIRKLAND. Smelling-salts. I thought they would revive you.

BARKELEY. They did. (*Feels scalp*) Is the top of my head still on? Where's Mason?

MRS. KIRKLAND. He and Miss Cloverleaf will be back in a minute.

BARKELEY. Was some one here—a moment ago—not Mason or Patty—but (*Dismissing the idea*) of course not! I must have imagined it.

MRS. KIRKLAND. You went unconscious for a minute!

BARKELEY. Why couldn't I have stayed so?

MRS. KIRKLAND. What?

BARKELEY. I—I mean I must going. (*Gets to his feet*)

PATTY. (*Speaks outside, and while she is entering at L.*) Where does the butler stay? I couldn't find him—(*Stops short on seeing BARKELEY standing up*) Oh, but you're all right again, aren't you?

BARKELEY. Of course I am. What's all the excitement about? Where's Charlie?

PATTY. Limbering up the car, and talking to a reporter between whiles. You're going to be in the papers. That's what you get for standing on your head on the sidewalk. I asked him to put me in instead, but he wouldn't. And as I'm not an acrobat, I couldn't insist. (*Turns to MRS. KIRKLAND*) Charlie will be up to get him in a minute.

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 47

BARKELEY. Am I a sort of parcels-post package to be called for?

PATTY. Maybe you aren't, Mr. Barkeley, but you looked like one a few minutes ago.

BARKELEY. My apologies for taking up so much of your time, Mrs. Kirkland.

MRS. KIRKLAND. Nonsense. Life would be very dull if nothing unexpected ever happened to take up one's time. But I hope there'll be no bad after-effects from your fall.

BARKELEY. There won't be, I'm sure.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Gives him her hand*) Next month we'll be at home on Friday afternoons. I'd like you to meet my niece.

BARKELEY. Thank you, I'll remember. (*Bows over her hand, crosses to door L. and waits for PATTY*)

PATTY. (*To BARKELEY*) Please go ahead, and tell Charlie to wait, and I'll be down in just a minute. (*BARKELEY bows and exits L. PATTY turns to MRS. KIRKLAND*) You'll excuse me for rushing off, won't you? I want a look at Charlie's new stenographer before the day's over—to see if she's homely enough to be permanent.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Laughs*) Patty, you're incorrigible! (*Steps to R. and calls*) Marion!

MARY ANNE. (*Enters from R.*) Yes, Auntie!

MRS. KIRKLAND. This little butterfly thinks she must go.

MARY ANNE. Oh! I'm sorry! I'm all right now, not a bit nervous—do stay!

PATTY. (*As MARY ANNE gives her her hand*) I can't my dear, and anyhow your hand still trembles. There's a surprise waiting for Mr. Barkeley when he gets down to the door. Mrs. Kirkland, Elaine Jewett was passing just now in her runabout and stopped to ask Charlie what the excitement was. When she found out, of course, she blew up a tire and remained. Her get-up is

48 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

simply stunning. Who would ever think her father was on the ragged edge of bankruptcy to look at her?

MRS. KIRKLAND. What's that? George Jewett in difficulties?

PATTY. (*Nods*) Charlie says it's known all over Wall Street. Well I hope the crash doesn't come before Elaine gives that fraternity dance. It would put a stop to everything, wouldn't it? Elaine wouldn't take very kindly to poverty and the simple life, would she? I don't blame her. Can't see anything picturesque about it myself. (*Automobile honks outside*) That's for me. Charlie never believes me when I say I'll only be a minute, and begins to signal. (*Runs to window*) Wonder if I can make him look up. (*Peeps out. Laughs*) Guess I won't try. Miss Jewett is insisting on Mr. Barkeley's climbing into the runabout, and I might interrupt and be anathema forever. (*Peeps again*) There, she's got him! Acts as if she owned him. Maybe she does. I'll see you both soon again, soon and often, I hope. Good-bye. (*Waves her hand, and runs off L.*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. Patty! Patty! Wait, dear, I want to send a message to your mother! (*Follows PATTY off L.*)

MARY ANNE. (*Peeps from window, steps back from it with hand to heart. Goes to chair and looks at it as if thinking of its late occupant. Kneels again in her former position, with her cheek against arm of chair. Speaks with the utmost pathos and tenderness*) Bill! Bill! (*Bows head, so that her face is hidden*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

TIME:—*A week later. Evening.*

SCENE:—*An ante-room in the home of ELAINE JEWETT. The few pieces of furniture are in the best of taste. At extreme R. there is a small desk with chair. Up R. near C. there is a table containing punch-bowl and glasses. At L. C. a sofa. Two small chairs are stood against the wall to be out of the way of dancers.*

DISCOVERED:—PATTY and MASON, HENDERSON and ELAINE: dancing. The hall is filled with dancing couples, as many as desired, and they pass the doorway C. at frequent intervals. Music is heard from off L.

ELAINE. (*Comes to a halt and begins to wield her fan*) There, I believe I'm tired!

HENDERSON. I was just beginning to strike my pace. You'll save the supper dance for me, Elaine?

ELAINE. (*Shrugs her shoulders*) Sorry, but I've already promised it to Mr. Barkeley.

HENDERSON. I hoped I was getting ahead of him for once.

ELAINE. Now don't look so glum about it! Go find that pretty Rose Davies in there. She's just dying for you to notice her.

HENDERSON. I wouldn't mind being relegated to the background for Barkeley if he cared for you the way I do, but——

ELAINE. You assume then that he doesn't care? That's not very complimentary to me.

HENDERSON. I have to say what I think is true, Elaine, whether you regard it as complimentary or not. There, I see I'm growing tiresome, so I'll go

50 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

find Miss Davies as you suggest. (*Bows ceremoniously, and exits c.*)

(TRELLA comes in from R. in semi-evening dress.)

ELAINE. (*Speaks, as TRELLA is entering*) Oh, Trella, I'm furious.

TRELLA. What has happened? Did the caterer disappoint you?

ELAINE. No, nothing like that. Mr. Henderson, just now, brought it home to me that Bill Barkeley is making me appear ridiculous, an object of pity, by holding off from presenting me with that diamond ring I've hoped for, and it has given me a sort of fright. Suppose I should lose out after all, and some other girl capture the Barkeley fortune instead?

TRELLA. (*Reproachfully*) Oh, Elaine! You know in your heart it's Mr. Henderson you care for and not Bill Barkeley.

ELAINE. But Barkeley is the man with the money!

TRELLA. (*Shrinking away from her sister*) Elaine!

ELAINE. There, dear, don't look so shocked. I'm quite fond of Bill on his own account, really I am. There, we won't talk about it any more, you angel! Are you sure you felt well enough to come downstairs?

TRELLA. Yes, indeed. My tiresome headache is almost gone. (*Watches the dancers pass door c.*) How happy everyone looks! And what beautiful dancers some of those girls are! It's nice to be down here where I can see them.

ELAINE. Oh, Trella, I can't help feeling bitter every time I think of how other girls can dance, and play tennis, and do everything they like, while you are only able to sit and look on, taking no part in it all! How can you bear it?

TRELLA. (*Sits in chair in front of desk, and opens it as she talks*) Because, while they dance, I can think about my work. If my little book only turns out to be the sort of one that will make other people forget their handicaps too, and fight to be cheerful and brave, just "looking on" won't be time wasted after all.

PATTY. (*Bounces in from L. Her gown is very diaphonous, with liberal display of neck and arms, as far as good taste will permit*) And how is the rising authoress this evening?

TRELLA. (*Smiling*) The descending authoress, you mean. I've just come downstairs.

ELAINE. (*As she starts for door C. speaks back over her shoulder*) Isn't she looking well, Patty? (*Exits C. and off L.*)

TRELLA. And how is Miss Patty Cloverleaf?

PATTY. If my health were any better, I simply couldn't stand it. My vitality is so intense that it annoys me. How do you like my gown? (*Turns about for inspection*) Do you think it's too extreme?

TRELLA. You can wear anything, Patty.

PATTY. Oh, but how successful am I at wearing nothing? That's the thing that counts. Now that you have taken to writing for the public print, why not describe my marvelous lack of costume at length?

TRELLA. But I haven't tried to do newspaper work, you foolish girl! Perhaps I should have begun more modestly, but it's a novel. See? (*Holds up a manuscript from desk*)

PATTY. An honest-to-goodness novel? You wonderful creature! If I even attempted such a thing, I know I should perish of brain-storm. (*Turns and addresses HENDERSON and BARKELEY, entering L.*) Fellow citizens! What do you think is going on here right under our eyes? The construction of a real, uplift novel?

HENDERSON. Is that so?

TRELLA. Patty, you little tease, who wants to hear about books at a dance?

BARKELEY. Why, we all do, Miss Jewett! We can dance any old time, but it's an event when you give us the pleasure of your society.

TRELLA. It is seldom that I get to see my friends all together, never going outside to dances.

BARKELEY. I've heard your sister speak of that coming book so often.

PATTY. Confidentially, what thrilling event are you writing about at this moment?

TRELLA. (*Fingers her Mss. with trembling hands*) Oh, you're all just pretending an interest, I know, but now that I have you here at my mercy, it is a temptation to talk about my story. I've reached the place where my hero meets his sweetheart of bye-gone days at a dance, and finds that he loves her just the same. It moves along quite nicely there, but back in chapter two, my villain is too feminine, I know he is! I wanted him to write a cold, brutal letter to a girl he'd grown tired of, and I couldn't make it sound like anything but a lady schoolteacher scolding a naughty-pupil. I wonder if one of you boys wouldn't just take a pencil and scribble something off for me in that line, so I could catch the masculine style of it?

BARKELEY. Well, if you'll let me see the letter as you had it, to get a general idea of what you want, I'll make a try at it.

HENDERSON. That's more courage than I've got, Barkeley.

TRELLA. Then if you'll just sit down at my desk—(BARKELEY *does so*. TRELLA *leaning to point out place in the Mss. she lays before him*) There it is. You see, he's been making love to two girls at once, and he hears that the poor little country girl he's engaged to has grown desperate and is coming to the City to look him up. So he deter-

mines to stop her if he can. (*She places a writing-pad before BARKELEY*)

BARKELEY. (*Slamming a pencil down on desk*) There—I broke the point of that pencil, first lick.

HENDERSON. Good start!

BARKELEY. (*Gets pen from tray*) But here's a fountain-pen, and someone is going to get drowned if he begins to guy my attempt to be useful.

TRELLA. Just let yourself go and begin to scribble, and the words will come, I know they will.

BARKELEY. Here's where I'm the villain and break her heart. (*Begins to write. Gets stuck*) Hm! (*Reverses pen and presses the end of it against his forehead*) "Come all ye spirits that tend on mortal thought!"

PATTY. Which is as much as to say "Go, all ye mortals that stand around and interfere with our inspiration," Mr. Henderson, you and I are checking the operations of Mr. Barkeley's genius, I know we are.

HENDERSON. Then come along to the music-room and give me a lesson on that Giraffe Glide you were dancing a while ago.

PATTY. I'll be delighted. (*They start up toward c.*) The glide's so awkward it's horribly popular

(*They exit c. and off L.*)

BARKELEY. (*Who has been scribbling busily*) How's this?

TRELLA. (*Takes up sheet of paper on which he has been writing, and reads aloud*)

"DEAR GIRL—

I understand you are coming to the city, and I suspect it may be in the hope of meeting me. In order to avoid any misunderstanding in case this happens, will say frankly that I never loved you, and my intentions toward you were never serious

for one moment. Should we meet, you will oblige me by ignoring the past as completely as I intend to do.

Yours very truly,

WILLIAM BARKELEY."

Fine! But you needn't have signed your name.

BARKELEY. (*Laughing*) Of course not, but I was so carried away by my own eloquence that I did it without thinking. Pretty bad attempt, I call it. Shall I tear it up?

TRELLA. Indeed you'll not! It's just the sort of beginning I want, and I can piece it out beautifully. Thank you so much.

BARKELEY. (*With playful pomposity*) Thank you for the distinguished honor of permitting me to assist you. (*Gets up and makes exaggerated bow*)

HENDERSON. (*Appears in door L.*) I don't like to interrupt this literary session, but your sister was inquiring for you just now, Miss Jewett. Wants you to meet some new arrival with Mrs. Kirkland, I believe.

TRELLA. I'll come right away. I know my masterpiece will be safe here on the desk with two gallant gentlemen to guard it. (*Places script on desk and exits L.*)

HENDERSON. (*Advancing*) Ever meet Mrs. Kirkland's niece?

BARKELEY. No, but from all I've heard about her, I think I should like to. Somebody said she had violet eyes. My first little sweetheart had violet eyes.

HENDERSON. The one you used to rave about when you were a freshman?

BARKELEY. (*Nods*) The same.

HENDERSON. You called her Mary something-or-other, didn't you?

BARKELEY. Yes, Mary Anne.

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 55

HENDERSON. Ha, ha, ha!

BARKELEY. (*Taking offense*) What are you laughing at? Have I said anything funny?

HENDERSON. Oh, no, old chap, no offense intended. It was just the way you said Anne through your nose, you know, like that "Anne."

BARKELEY. There's nothing funny about the name itself, though. Anne's is pretty. Queens have been named that.

HENDERSON. Yes, yes, of course. Er—the Mary Anne queen has no strings on you now, has she?

BARKELEY. Haven't seen her in years, and the last I heard of her she was in love with somebody else.

HENDERSON. Then if no other girl has a claim on you, why do you play fast and loose with Elaine Jewett the way you do?

BARKELEY. Confound it, Henderson, you've no right to speak to me like this!

HENDERSON. That isn't answering my question.

BARKELEY. Fast and loose with Elaine Jewett? Why, you're crazy! She looks upon our friendship as purely Platonic; she's said so often.

HENDERSON. Well, no matter how *you* look upon it, it's up to you either to propose or get out of the way of other chaps who—well, who thinks of her without any Platonic tag attachment whatever.

BARKELEY. Meaning——?

HENDERSON. Yours truly.

BARKELEY. By jove, Henderson, I never suspected it. Well, why didn't you say so before? Ours has been a pleasant friendship, of course, but a fellow has no right to monopolize a girl's time just because she's kind enough to allow it. If I've been standing in your way, I'm sorry.

(*Offers his hand. HENDERSON takes it.*)

TEDDY. (*Enters from L. and rushes up to HEN-*

DERSON *and* BARKELEY) Well, say. Talk about a stunning doll-baby and a queen, the Washington debutante heads them all! She's a regular raving beauty, and, believe me, Teddy is some judge! Her clothes just shout Paris. Everything about her is fully four leaps ahead of New York right now. Run along in there and get busy kow towing to her chaperone, or there won't be a dance left for either of you and you'll be disgraced, strictly out it!

HENDERSON. There's your chance, Barkeley, to meet the girl of the Violet eyes. Come on! (*As BARKELEY turns away*) Why, what's the matter?

BARKELEY. Now that I'm on the brink, the thought of meeting her gives me stage fright. I don't know why it should, but it does.

TEDDY. Come on! We'll see that nobody hurts you!

(*TEDDY and HENDERSON between them drag BARKELEY off, he protesting "not yet," "why not wait awhile," etc. As TEDDY and the others exit L., PATTY and MASON come on at C. from L. in hall.*)

PATTY. And what do you think of the new star in the firmament?

MASON. Next the twinkler addressing me, I think she's the brightest ever.

PATTY. Oh, you needn't make any exceptions! I'm just remote star-dust compared to the sparkle of Marion. Didn't I prophesy the hit she would make among the men of Yale?

MASON. (*In impressive monotone, holding up his right hand*) I solemnly aver that you did. By the way, now that we are alone, and with no inquisitive Columbus at hand to discover us——

PATTY. (*As he approaches her*) Now don't ask me for a kiss—it disturbs my complexion.

MASON. I wasn't going to. Last time you came off on my coat.

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 57

PATTY. Then for once I made a visible impression on someone. Well, what's the dark secret? Turn on the flashlight.

MASON. Did you notice the way Elaine Jewett acted in there when she got her first glimpse of Miss Marion Simmons?

PATTY. No, how did she act?

MASON. As if she'd been struck by lightning, but remained standing up because she didn't know she'd been hit.

PATTY. Why, that sounds as if they might have been rivals or something in the past. But that's impossible! This is Marion's first season in society.

MASON. There's an untold story back of that meeting just the same.

PATTY. Oh, you're always doing this amateur detective work, Charlie. I wouldn't mind if it ever turned out for anyone's benefit.

MASON. It does, sometimes. Didn't you tell me a little while ago that you were thirsty?

PATTY. I did, and do.

MASON. (*Tragically*) Then hist! Hither!

PATTY. Where?

MASON. To yon table, where my keen detective sense locates a punchbowl.

PATTY. (*As he drags her up to table*) Hurry and ladle some of it out. There goes my favorite waltz.

(*Music sounds softly from off L.*)

MASON. (*With extravagant ceremony and gestures*) As a ladler, I'm a Lulu!

(*PATTY partakes of the punch. MRS. KIRKLAND, MARY ANNE and BARKELEY enter c. MRS. KIRKLAND and MARY ANNE are both exquisitely attired.*)

58 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*As PATTY and MASON exit L. dancing*) I'm afraid you'll have to excuse my niece from this dance, Mr. Barkeley. She must sit out one occasionally, I insist.

BARKELEY. (*Eagerly*) Then may she sit it out with me? (*As MRS. KIRKLAND pretends to hesitate*) Your niece and I are old friends, you know.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Turns to MARY ANNE with well feigned surprise*) Indeed? You should have mentioned your early acquaintance, my dear.

MARY ANNE. (*Lightly and indifferently*) But it was such a long, long time ago, when we were just boy and girl. It's strange Mr. Barkeley should remember it.

BARKELEY. Well, I like that! Four years isn't quite a life time, you know. I remember distinctly just how you looked the first time we ever met. You wore a funny little dress that didn't fit, and your hair was all tumbled about your face. You haven't changed a particle.

MARY ANNE. (*With a mischievous smile*) Auntie, do you realize what Mr. Barkeley is saying? That my dress is funny and doesn't fit and that my hair needs combing?

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Laughing*) Really, Mr. Barkeley, there's nothing like frankness!

BARKELEY. (*Confused*) Oh, I didn't mean that, you know I didn't. I'm so surprised at meeting her here that I hardly know what I'm about. You have changed, Mary Anne, awfully.

MARY ANNE. (*Smiling as before*) Sorry that the change is awful.

BARKELEY. (*Still more confused*) In your looks, I mean. You used to be pretty.

MARY ANNE. (*Laughing*) And now I'm not. Thank you.

BARKELEY. I didn't say that. You used to be merely pretty, I meant, but now you are beautiful. That's what I tried to say. I—I never felt so awk-

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 59

ward in my life. You see, Mrs. Kirkland, I can't quite get over finding that your niece is the same little girl that I——

MRS. KIRKLAND. Excuse me, but I've just remembered some word our Tea Club president asked me to give Isabel Slocumb. I'll go speak to her before I forget it. (*Exits L.*)

(MARY ANNE *crosses to sofa L. and sits, indicating with fan that BARKELEY is welcome to a seat beside her.*)

BARKELEY. (*As he takes seat beside MARY ANNE*) It seems so strange meeting you again, sitting here beside you. Let me fan you. (*Reaches for her fan, then stares at her, fascinated, fanning himself*)

MARY ANNE. (*As the situation grows embarrassing*) It is quite warm this evening.

BARKELEY. (*Sees what he has been doing and hastily begins to fan MARY ANNE instead*) I beg your pardon, I'm rattled. Mary Anne, little Mary Anne, can this be really you?

MARY ANNE. (*Solemnly*) Why, I think so, Mr. Barkeley; yes, I'm quite sure of it. (*BARKELEY forgets and fans himself again, then remembers with a start, and fans MARY ANNE*) You were saying?

BARKELEY. So I was! What was it?

MARY ANNE. Perhaps we'd better finish this dance.

BARKELEY. And spoil these wonderful, bewildering moments? Oh, no! I don't know yet whether I just imagine them, or whether they're true. How have you managed to take your place as a belle and a beauty, and yet remain the same little girl I knew so long ago?

MARY ANNE. Really, I don't feel in the mood for personalities, Mr. Barkeley.

60 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

BARKELEY. I beg your pardon. Of course you're not the same little girl after all. I had no right to expect you would be. But a man's got to speak out if he's human, when he meets the girl who was his first little sweetheart, and finds that the bud has blossomed into a beautiful rose.

MARY ANNE. (*Rises*) Such flattery!

BARKELEY. (*Rises*) Flattery?

MARY ANNE. (*Starting away*) And I'm growing impatient to dance.

BARKELEY. I meant every word of it.

MARY ANNE. (*Turns quickly, and speaks lightly but with a tinge of bitterness*) Men always do for the moment, I've heard.

BARKELEY. How you have changed! You always were the dainty sort of creature that made a man feel as if he was all hands and feet, but so gentle and kind! A fellow just talked his heart out to you before he knew what he was about. That last dance we went to together, the wild roses along the road coming home, and the moonlight so bright it was all like day! Doesn't our meeting like this recall it to you, Mary Anne?

MARY ANNE. Yes, wasn't I ridiculous?

BARKELEY. Ridiculous? Why, what on earth do you mean?

MARY ANNE. (*With a light self-mockery*) I took it all so seriously.

BARKELEY. (*Earnestly*) Well, why not?

MARY ANNE. (*With amused sarcasm*) Oh, Mr. Barkeley! Ha, ha, ha!

BARKELEY. Don't laugh. It hurts.

MARY ANNE. Why, one would almost think you had been serious yourself.

BARKELEY. I was serious. I acknowledge you did grow a bit dim in my mind after we stopped writing——

MARY ANNE. "We," did you say?

BARKELEY. (*Hastily*) I've always wanted to

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 61

explain that. Dad thought we were too young, both of us, to know what we really wanted, and said if I'd promise to drop our correspondence and wait until I was through college——

MARY ANNE. (*Betraying interest in spite of herself*) Your father asked you to do that?

BARKELEY. Yes, and I gave in because I thought a few years or a thousand wouldn't make any difference with us. I meant to come back to you when my probation was up. I suppose I can hardly make you understand why I didn't.

MARY ANNE. (*Coldly*) No, I'm afraid you can't, and, after all, why should you trouble yourself to try?

BARKELEY. (*Impulsively*) Because I'm crazy about you all over again! (*Starts toward her, but she runs away from him*) Mary Anne, little Mary Anne, can't we go back to where we were?

MARY ANNE. (*Shakes her head sadly*) I'm afraid not, Mr. Barkeley.

BARKELEY. (*With sudden fierce jealousy*) Does—Boots—stand between us?

MARY ANNE. (*Amazed at the question*) What?

BARKELEY. Boots—the man you were in love with—engaged to—a year ago?

MARY ANNE. I never met—Boots—I don't know what—Boots—you're talking about. I was not engaged a year ago to—Boots—and I never expect to be.

(*ELAINE appears unseen in door L.*)

BARKELEY. Thank heaven for that much at least. Oh, Mary Anne, I've been a fumbler and all kinds of an idiot, I see it now—but——

ELAINE. (*Smilingly interrupts, walking toward them*) I beg pardon. (*BARKELEY and MARY ANNE start apart*) I was looking for my sister. Didn't she pass through here just now?

62 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

MARY ANNE. I hardly think so.

BARKELEY. I'm certain she didn't. Shan't we finish out this dance, Miss Simmons?

MARY ANNE. If you like.

(They dance off C., and off L. in hall. As they disappear ELAINE, with an angry exclamation, begins to pace up and down. TRELLA comes from L. and sees her. Watches her a moment in silence, and then speaks anxiously.)

TRELLA. What on earth is the matter, Elaine? I slipped away to follow you as soon as I could. What were you so nervous about? What made you rush from the room the way you did?

ELAINE. Because I wanted to see if my suspicions as to what was going on out here were correct, and they were. I found them together.

TRELLA. Found whom?

ELAINE. Bill Barkeley and Miss Marion Simmons, who, as you know, turns out to be none other than that sly little puss we knew in Farmdale as plain Mary Anne.

TRELLA. *(Crosses to desk and picks up her Mss., including the letter BILL BARKELEY wrote for her)* Well, what of it?

ELAINE. What of it? Never in all his life has Bill looked at me the way he looked at her. Almost fell at her feet when he recognized her! He even forgot he had asked me for this dance. I know now how a gambler must feel when he stakes everything on one throw of the dice and loses. Oh, but she shan't come between me and all I'd hoped for! She shan't!

TRELLA. Sh! Somebody might hear you. Do try to be calm, dear. If anyone saw you pacing up and down like this, what would they think?

ELAINE. *(Unheedinglly)* Look what she used to be—a frumpy little country bumpkin, a nobody!

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 63

Now, she's an acknowledged beauty, her social position better than mine, her gowns more beautiful. Why, it almost seems as if that aunt of hers had worked this out on purpose to torment me! And to think Bill Barkeley could be turned from me so easily!

TRELLA. Elaine, it's your pride that's hurt, not your heart, and you don't know what Lloyd Henderson might accomplish in the world if you'd only be a little kind to him. He worships you. Why must it be Bill Barkeley?

ELAINE. (*Passionately*) Why? Simply because if it isn't, we're beggars!

TRELLA. (*Shocked*) Sister! Why, what on earth do you mean?

ELAINE. I mean that just a few minutes ago I was called to the 'phone and learned from father's own lips that the firm has gone to the wall. Tomorrow the news of his failure will be in all the papers.

TRELLA. (*Dazed*) Father—has failed?

ELAINE. Oh, it isn't the surprise to me that it is to you! I suspected what it meant when he remained at his office night after night instead of coming home to us, and from conversations I've caught over the 'phone. He's been on the down grade ever since that slump in copper.

TRELLA. Poor old Daddy! Oh, we must do all we can to cheer him. And you and I can still be happy even if we haven't much money, so long as we have him.

ELAINE. Happy? You don't know what you're talking about. There's no happiness without money. Those who pretend there is are just going around deceiving themselves and the world. Imagine doing without Paris gowns, giving up one's maid, selling one's box at the opera to pay one's rent! I'd rather be dead! And to think we have to go on smiling

64 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

and chatting with our guests in there as if this terrible thing had never happened!

TRELLA. Elaine, sister, it's only a tragedy if we make it so.

ELAINE. Oh, what a child you are not to realize the meaning of this calamity! I'll bring Bill Barkeley to time now, or die in the attempt. Why, how strange!

TRELLA. (*As ELAINE points to the letter she is holding in her hand*) What?

ELAINE. That I should notice something there in Barkeley's handwriting just as I mentioned his name. What is it?

TRELLA. Oh, nothing much! (*Hands it to ELAINE, who scans it while she talks*) It's just a letter I have use for in my novel. I asked him to write it to help me out with a difficult spot in chapter two.

ELAINE. But it reads like a real letter, signed with his name and all?

TRELLA. It isn't, though. Give it to me, dear. I want to pin it to my manuscript.

ELAINE. I'll attend to that for you and leave it on your desk. One of us must go back to the drawing-room, and I want a moment or two to myself. (*Keeps letter and takes Mss. from TRELLA*)

TRELLA. I'll go, Elaine, dear, take all the time that you like. (*Exits L.*)

(*ELAINE, left alone, again reads the lines written by BARKELEY, shows that it has suggested to her a plan of action. She crosses to desk and lays the Mss. upon it. Then, as if reaching a sudden decision, draws a blank envelope toward her. She spreads out the BARKELEY note and it becomes apparent that she is trying to copy the handwriting for the superscription on the envelope. Having completed her task, she puts the letter inside the envelope and seals it.*)

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 65

Just as she does so, HENDERSON steps in from c. and speaks from across the room.)

HENDERSON. I don't blame you at all.

ELAINE. (*Gives a guilty start and turns facing him, holding the sealed envelope behind her*) Blame me for what?

HENDERSON. For preferring your own solitary society to that of the rest of us.

ELAINE. (*Relieved*) Oh! (*Very sweetly, almost caressingly*) Would you like to do me a little favor, Lloyd?

HENDERSON. Would I? As if I didn't just stand around waiting for her Majesty to wave her wand.

ELAINE. (*Tapping the palm of one hand with the envelope she is holding in the other*) I wonder if you couldn't contrive somehow to separate Marion Simmons from her Aunt and bring her out here for a moment. I've heard something I want to tell her, in confidence.

HENDERSON. Well, if the fellows are still buzzing about her the way they were, it will be about like attempting to carry off Helen from Troy, but I'm willing to try. (*He sees MARY ANNE and TEDDY enter the hall from L. and stand chatting outside door c.*) Unnecessary. There she is now.

(*ELAINE turns and sees MARY ANNE, then speaks hastily under breath to HENDERSON.*)

ELAINE. Then contrive to drag Teddy away after a minute or two, and keep him as long as you can. (*Goes up toward c.*) Oh, Mr. Farnum, do bring Miss Simmons in for a glass of punch. The evening has grown so sultry.

MARY ANNE. (*Gratefully*) Something cool would be very refreshing.

TEDDY. (*As he and MARY ANNE enter c.*) Fine suggestion, Miss Jewett. That punch is all to the

66 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

good. I sampled it a while ago. Allow me. (*Gets behind bowl*)

ELAINE. (*As MARY ANNE seats herself on sofa L.*) I've hardly had a chance to speak with you a moment since you came, Miss Simmons. (*Seats herself beside MARY ANNE. TEDDY fills two glasses with punch, and HENDERSON carries them over to the girls on a small tray*) But I hope I shall see a great deal of you after this.

MARY ANNE. (*Takes punch from tray*) (*Smiles up at HENDERSON*) Thank you.

ELAINE. No more for me just now.

(*HENDERSON carries tray with one glass back to table where TEDDY has, in the meantime, filled a glass for himself.*)

MARY ANNE. (*Sips punch at intervals*) I've been having such a good time, Miss Jewett. Everyone has been so kind. They haven't made a stranger of me at all.

TEDDY. (*Comes down, carrying his glass of punch*) The only trouble is that Miss Simmons is too popular. It threatens to disrupt the fraternity. Danger of duels and all sorts of things after this evening is over. (*Takes spoonful of punch*)

MARY ANNE. (*Laughs*) Be sure to have the duels by moonlight. They'll be more picturesque.

HENDERSON. Miss Simmons, how can you be so heartless?

TEDDY. (*Dramatically*) Have you no pity for your unfortunate victims?

MARY ANNE. Men are happiest when they're fighting. Why pity them?

HENDERSON. By the way, Teddy, I just remember—excuse the interruption, please, young ladies, but I promised to deliver a message to Mr. Farnum, a confidential message, and——

ELAINE. Confidential? Run along then out in

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 67

the hall, the two of you. We wouldn't intrude for worlds, would we, Miss Simmons.

MARY ANNE. (*Laughingly*) Not unless we had the chance.

TEDDY. But I don't choose to run along. Old Henderson can talk to me any time. He isn't a novelty.

HENDERSON. But I promised to deliver the message immediately.

TEDDY. (*Almost choking over his attempt to dispose of the punch and HENDERSON at the same time*) I don't want to hear it.

HENDERSON. But when I promised to deliver it

TEDDY. Then deliver and be done with it.

HENDERSON. (*Hesitatingly*) Right here before everyone?

TEDDY. Of course. What ails you anyhow?

HENDERSON. (*Very significantly*) It's somewhat personal, I fear.

TEDDY. There's no one sending me personal messages. I haven't flirted with a chorus-girl in a year.

HENDERSON. (*Lowers his voice, as if with extreme regret at being forced to speak out*) It's a message from—from your tailor, Teddy.

TEDDY. (*Scared and subdued*) Why, but I don't—at least if I do, I'd forgotten——

HENDERSON. Well, he said to tell you in so many words——

TEDDY. (*Interrupts hastily*) Not before the whole world, if you please. (*Turns toward MARY ANNE*) Excuse me a moment, Miss Simmons.

MARY ANNE. Certainly.

TEDDY. (*Starts toward C. with HENDERSON, talking under his breath, but very indignantly*) What's the matter with you? Why should you choose such a time as this? If I ever set eyes on that tailor again—(*He and HENDERSON exit C. and off L.*)

ELAINE. Let me relieve you of that. (*Takes*

68 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

punch from MARY ANNE, and goes toward table with it)

MARY ANNE. That was very nice indeed.

ELAINE. (*Produces letter from the bosom of her gown*) Oh, by the way, here's a letter some one must have dropped by accident! (*Reaches side of sofa where MARY ANNE is sitting*) It's addressed to you.

MARY ANNE. (*Looks up, surprised*) To me?

ELAINE. Yes, see for yourself. (*Gives MARY the letter*)

MARY ANNE. (*Astonished*) With the old Farmdale address!

ELAINE. Evidently the writer did not expect to meet you in the city, and thought you were living there yet.

MARY ANNE. (*Puzzled*) All ready for mailing but the stamp. Where did you find it, may I ask?

ELAINE. It was lying by the drawing-room door.

MARY ANNE. Why, how extraordinary! There's no one here who'd be sending me a letter out to Farmdale—no one who knew me there—(*Thinks a moment*) except Mr. Barkeley, and it couldn't be from him. We weren't in the habit of writing to each other.

ELAINE. Come to think of it, that does look like his odd, triangular handwriting.

MARY ANNE. I don't know why, but I have a hesitancy about opening it, as if somehow it didn't belong to me at all.

ELAINE. Dear me, if you had as much curiosity as I have, you'd have seen the inside of it at once.

MARY ANNE. I suppose I am silly to feel that way about it. I'll open it now, if you'll excuse me.

ELAINE. Certainly.

MARY ANNE. (*Opens the letter, reads it, and her face becomes very serious*) You were right, Miss Jewett. It was Mr. Barkeley's triangular handwriting. He did not expect to meet me here, and

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 69

thought I was still in Farmdale. (*Puts letter back in its envelope*)

ELAINE. There now, I hope I didn't do wrong in handing it over. I hope it's nothing unpleasant!

MARY ANNE. (*Suddenly suspicious*) Pardon me, but that sounds very much as if you knew what the letter contained—had something to do with the writing of it perhaps.

ELAINE. (*Very stiffly*) I had nothing to do with the writing of it, nor did Mr. Barkeley tell me what was in it. I give you my word of honor that he didn't. I hope that satisfies you.

MARY ANNE. (*Her voice trembling*) Yes, it does. I'm sorry I spoke as I did.

ELAINE. (*With air of injured innocence*) I'm quite afraid for you to tell Mr. Barkeley that I gave you his letter. He may be offended too, and act as strangely about it as you did.

MARY ANNE. Please set your mind at rest on that score. I have no intention of mentioning to him that it ever reached me.

(*ELAINE, turning away, shows relief and triumph in her face. MARY ANNE rising, walks agitatedly toward desk, twisting the letter in her hands.*)

TEDDY. (*Rushes in from c. tumultuously*) Well, what do you think of Henderson? He hadn't talked with my tailor at all, doesn't even know who he is. It was all a very crude attempt at a joke, merely to sidetrack me. He and the others thought I was taking up too much of your time, I suppose, Miss Simmons.

ELAINE. He deserves a good scolding, Mr. Farnum, and I shall make it my business to give it to him. (*Exits c.*)

(*MARY ANNE drops the letter she has been holding in the waste-basket at the side of TRELLA'S desk.*)

70 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

TEDDY. I'll get even with him yet, and with anyone else who tries to prevent me from enjoying your society. (*BARKELEY enters L. Music starts off L.*) It's a wonder someone isn't claiming you for the next dance right now——

BARKELEY. (*Smiling*) Someone is claiming her, Teddy. Miss Simmons, this is our dance, I believe?

MARY ANNE. Oh, is it? (*Walks toward c. from desk*)

TEDDY. Well, this is plainly one of those evenings when I should have stayed at home to wind the clock, and hold converse with the cat. (*Exits L.*)

BARKELEY. (*Coming close to MARY ANNE, and speaking very tenderly*) I've been counting the minutes until I could come after you.

MARY ANNE. I find I'm rather tired and don't care to dance. Will you take me back to my Aunt, please, Mr. Barkeley?

BARKELEY. (*Starts back, amazed and hurt*) "Mr. Barkeley?" I thought we agreed in there a little while ago—that we'd go back to "Bill" and "Mary Anne."

MARY ANNE. Since then I've changed my mind. Men aren't the only ones who can claim the right to do so, you know.

BARKELEY. (*His amazement and chagrin increasing*) Why, Mary Anne!

MARY ANNE. Miss Simmons, if you please. (*Starts toward door c.*)

BARKELEY. Wait! Don't go like that! (*As she hesitates, approaches her once more*) I'll take you back to Mrs. Kirkland of course, if you wish it, but first you owe me some sort of an explanation. Who has been talking with you? What has been said to turn you against me?

MARY ANNE. Why should you care for the good opinion of one you have met again so casually? You didn't expect to see me when you came here to-night, did you?

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 71

BARKELEY. Of course not. I was certain you were still out in Farmdale, was even thinking of writing to you there. (*She starts away again*) Oh, Mary Anne—Miss Simmons, I mean!—Don't run away from me. Don't play hot and cold with me. You still care for me, I know you do!

MARY ANNE. (*With a cold little smile*) Indeed? And how do you know it?

BARKELEY. Because, that day of the accident, there at your Aunt's house, it was you who knelt at my side, you who laid your soft cheek against my hand! Oh, all this time I've been imagining it was only a beautiful dream, but as soon as I looked into your eyes again to-night, something told me it was true, that I didn't just imagine it. You couldn't have acted like that if you hadn't cared as you did in the old days, you couldn't! You can't have changed so entirely in the last few minutes.

MARY ANNE. But you see the last few minutes have taught me such a lot of things. I never knew before. They've taught me it is only because I'm gowned and jewelled like the other girls of your set that you find me attractive, only because I happen to be Mrs. Kirkland's niece and society's pet, that your wandering thoughts return to me, and that as far as the Mary Anne Simmons you used to know is concerned, you never really loved her even when you first swore that you did; you wanted to be rid of the poor freckle-faced bumpkin even then, in your heart. Well, you are rid of her now, rid of her forever. (*As BARKELEY starts to speak*) Never pretend that you love me again as long as you live, never, never, for nothing you could say or do would make me believe you, or trust in you again. I'm done with you, done! (*Her voice breaks, and with a half sob she turns away and runs off c.*)

(*BARKELEY drops into a chair in an attitude of utter dejection.*)

72 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

ELAINE. (*Enters at L. Looks to see that she and BARKELEY are alone, then speaks*) I had to get away from the crowd a moment. Trella and I have had upsetting news this evening. (*Apparently noticing his dejected attitude for the first time*) Why, Bill, what's the matter?

BARKELEY. (*Trying to appear as usual*) Nothing—that is—oh, never mind about me! What were you going to say?

ELAINE. That can wait. What has hurt you, Bill? Tell me, won't you?

BARKELEY. Your popular guest—Miss Simmons—has shown that she despises me, that's all.

ELAINE. (*Turns away her face, but listens eagerly*) When? How?

BARKELEY. Here, just now, in a short conversation we had together.

ELAINE. Why should you care what she thinks of you?

BARKELEY. Because she's the girl I love, has always been the girl.

ELAINE. (*With cold politeness*) Oh!

BARKELEY. Looking back on the past few years, I realize how much of a cad I must have seemed to her, but if she meant to punish me for it, why was she so kind just a few moments before?

ELAINE. Her head has been completely turned, they say, since Mrs. Kirkland took her up. The rise was too rapid for her to stand. She has grown to be a great coquette, I hear.

BARKELEY. No, no, she's entirely unspoiled. If it were merely vanity, or coquetry that made her turn upon me the way she did, I might find comfort in the thought, but she was as simple and sincere as she ever was—only with a bitterness I cannot understand! Mary Anne! Mary Anne! (*Buries his face in his hands*)

ELAINE. (*Puts her hand on his shoulder*) Bill, don't act like that. I can't bear to see you take it

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 73

so hard. Put her out of your mind. She's not worthy of you, and there are other girls who'd almost give their lives for what she's thrown away,—other girls who have always cared for you, will go on caring no matter if—oh, what am I saying? (*Turns away, apparently much confused*)

BARKELEY. (*Amazed*) Other girls? Why, you can't mean——

ELAINE. (*With pretended impulse*) That I care? Yes, I do. Oh, I shouldn't confess this to you, I know, it's—it's unwomanly—but to see you suffer because of the cruelty, the indifference of another girl, when I—(*Turns away, shielding her face with her arms*) Oh, I'm so ashamed! Forget what I have said, please, please!

BARKELEY. (*Kindly*) No, why should I forget it? Your sympathy is very grateful, Elaine. I confess I never suspected—can hardly believe yet—that your feeling for me is anything more than friendliness. And there are other chaps, Henderson, for instance——

ELAINE. Don't speak of him, or anyone else. You only make it harder for me when you plead the cause of another. Oh, Bill, don't you care for me, just a little?

BARKELEY. I've got to be honest with you, Elaine. When it's a question of anyone other than Mary Anne, I've only a shred of heart left, not worth the offering. .

ELAINE. But what if I'd be grateful for even that shred?

BARKELEY. (*Amazed but gallant*) Why, then it's yours, of course, and I'll try to make you happy.

ELAINE. Bill! (*Goes up to him and raises her face for a kiss. He kisses her upon the forehead*) Come into the library, and I'll tell you the news about father. No one knows it yet, but Trella and myself. Come, I don't want anyone to overhear. (*Exits R. followed by BARKELEY*)

74 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

(Enter from C. TRELLA, PATTY and MARY ANNE, apparently continuing a conversation begun before they made their appearance.)

PATTY. (Laughing) And as I was saying to Charlie—Trella ought to put Teddy into her novel just as he is. He'd make a hit.

MARY ANNE. (Turns to TRELLA in surprise) Why, is Miss Jewett writing a novel?

TRELLA. I'm trying too, though I'm afraid the publishers may pronounce it a joke-book instead, with the joke on me. Which just reminds me that Elaine said she'd put it back on my desk. (Goes toward desk. PATTY sits on sofa, and MARY ANNE stands behind her)

PATTY. And did Mr. Barkeley help you out all right?

TRELLA. (Desists from looking for Mss. for a moment, and turns to answer) He certainly did. You see, Miss Simmons, at a particular place in my story, I have my villain try to rid himself of the girl he's grown tired of by sending her a curt and decisive letter. Well, I made a dozen tries at that letter, but it simply refused to be curt and decisive, so a while ago—I don't know exactly what put it in my head to do it—I pressed Mr. Barkeley into service to add the masculine touch the letter needed. (Picks up Mss. of book from desk, and begins to shuffle thru it) Where is that letter, I wonder? Elaine said she'd pin it to my manuscript and leave it here, but she hasn't done so. Mercy, I hope it isn't lost! I wouldn't want to impose on Mr. Barkeley again. He didn't particularly enjoy being villainous, even for literary purposes, I know he didn't.

PATTY. Can't you remember the way it worded?

TRELLA. Perhaps I can. It wasn't very long. (Thinks a moment, then begins to repeat words of letter) "Dear girl:—

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 75

I understand you are coming to the city, and I suspect it may be in the hope of meeting me"—Er—
(*Tries to remember the rest of it, but fails*)

MARY ANNE. (*Involuntarily, pressing her hand to her heart*) Oh!

PATTY. (*Startled*) What's the matter, Miss Simmons?

MARY ANNE. (*Smiles*) Why—I—had a sort of—smothering sensation for just a moment, but I'm all right now. That was a real letter you were quoting from, wasn't it, Miss Jewett? One that Mr. Barkeley wrote and meant to send?

TRELLA. (*Setting MARY ANNE right*) Real? When he wrote it at my request?

MARY ANNE. (*Insisting*) But it sounds as if it might be intended for a real letter to a real girl.

TRELLA. That's just what Elaine seemed to think. Which shows it's just the sort of thing I want—convincing, you know.

MARY ANNE. Let me look too. Maybe I can help you find it. (*Walks toward desk*)

PATTY. Me too. I never, never find anything, but I'm always willing to try. (*Jumps up, and looks carefully under a sofa-cushion*) No, it isn't there. If it had been, the shock would have killed me.

(*TRELLA goes toward table to look, and as she does so, MARY ANNE stoops and rescues letter from the scrap-basket, drops envelope back in basket, and comes toward TRELLA.*)

MARY ANNE. Is this it?

TRELLA. (*Snatches it eagerly*) It certainly is. Where did you find it?

MARY ANNE. In the scrap-basket.

TRELLA. How careless of Elaine to drop it there! I can't understand it. Thank you so much, Miss Simmons. It shan't escape again. This time I'll lock it in my desk, and keep the key. (*Suits the action to the word*)

76 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

TEDDY. (*Enters from L.*) Oh, Miss Simmons! The special exhibition dance by Pierre and Estelle of the Follies is about to begin. Mrs. Kirkland was kind enough to say I might come after you.

PATTY. Well, why didn't Charlie come after me, I wonder? I know! He's probably trying to flirt with Estelle! Come on, Trella! We mustn't miss the fun! (*She and TRELLA exit C. BARKELEY enters R.*)

TEDDY. I'm sure you'll enjoy little Estelle when she turns on the twirls. (*Offers arms*)

MARY ANNE. (*Caught by the sorrowful look BARKELEY gives her from across the room*) I think I'll ask you to come back after me a little later if you don't mind. I want a word with Mr. Barkeley, just now.

TEDDY. A little later is better than never. That man Barkeley is a natural born trouble-maker! (*Exits L.*)

BARKELEY. (*Comes toward MARY ANNE. They stand looking at each other in silence for a moment*) You—you wish to speak to me, punish me still further, Miss Simmons?

MARY ANNE. (*Very softly*) It needn't be "Miss Simmons." I've changed my mind again. I don't want to punish you, no! Instead, I'd like to apologize.

BARKELEY. (*Amazed*) Apologize?

(*ELAINE appears unscen at R.*)

MARY ANNE. (*Rapidly and with feeling*) For misjudging you, doubting your sincerity, accusing you in my mind of something you were never guilty of. I take it all back, every harsh word. Can you forgive me, Bill?

BARKELEY. (*Greatly moved*) "Bill?"

ELAINE. (*Comes forward, speaks lightly, but with an edge*) Patching up some misunderstanding,

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 77

you two? That's right. (*Turns to MARY ANNE*) But, really, you must not call him "Bill," you know, or I shall be jealous. Mr. Barkeley and I have just become engaged.

MARY ANNE. (*Half stunned*) Engaged?

BARKELEY. (*Cries out to her in love and despair*) Mary Anne!

MARY ANNE. (*With cold dignity*) I congratulate you, Mr. Barkeley.

(*The music of a Hungarian dance begins off L. TEDDY rushes in from L. Simultaneously MASON and HENDERSON descend upon MARY ANNE from C.*)

TEDDY. She's turned on the pifouettes. You mustn't miss a minute of this!

HENDERSON. Look here, Teddy, I've just had seats set aside for Miss Simmons and her Aunt myself.

MASON. Let me take Miss Simmons in, Teddy. I haven't danced with her once this evening.

TEDDY. (*MARY ANNE's arm in his, he waves them away with other hand*) Keep back! Keep back! If anyone interferes this time—it's murder!

(*Starts toward L. MASON and HENDERSON follow, saying "But Teddy!" "Don't be a goop!" etc. TEDDY, MARY ANNE, MASON and HENDERSON exit L. BARKELEY stands staring after them. ELAINE at extreme R., regards him with great annoyance, twisting at her fan, enraged that he remains unconscious of her presence.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE:—*Same as Act I.*TIME:—*The next Summer.*

DISCOVERED:—MRS. SIMMONS, *dusting*; BETSY, *with wash-cloth in hand and a pail of water at her feet, standing still, staring out of the window.*

MRS. SIMMONS. Now take a damp cloth and wipe off that rockin'-chair, Betsy. Sister Rhoda will be down stairs as soon as she gets her things off, and though she mightn't notice if there was a speck of dust, 'twould give me nervous prostration if she did. (*As BETSY dabs at window sill with damp cloth*) The rockin'-chair I said, child. What does possess you to fuss around that window? You'd think there was a circus procession a goin' past, or somethin'.

BETSY. The hired man——

MRS. SIMMONS. For the land sakes, is it the hired man again?

BETSY. Ye-es'm.

MRS. SIMMONS. I thought when Peter got married and we took on a new hired man, you'd get sensible. What's he doin' that you can't turn your head this way even when I'm a talkin' to you?

BETSY. Smilin'.

MRS. SIMMONS. An' stoppin' work to show off his teeth, I s'pose. He's got just about brains enough to keep a Plymouth Rock rooster from fallin' off the fence, an' no more. Will you wipe off that chair or won't you?

BETSY. Ye-es'm. (*Wipes chair, but tries to keep an eye on the window while she does so*) A

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 79

Plymouth Rock rooster ain't so bad at scratchin' round an' makin' a livin' for the family.

MRS. SIMMONS. Sometimes, Betsy, you say things so idiotic that they most sound sensible. Do you realize that you keep a rubbin' just one leg of that chair as if it was all the poor thing had?

BETSY. (*Turns chair and begins to wipe off another part of it*) I'm absent minded in the Spring of the year.

MRS. SIMMONS. It ain't only in the Spring of the year your mind's absent, child, though I do notice you're slacker than usual the last few days. What's the reason?

BETSY. (*Drawels, staring out of the window again*) I dunno.

MRS. SIMMONS. You're lookin' at the reason now, an' I ain't goin' to stand no more of it. (*Pulls BETSY back and goes up to window herself. Calls*) Henry! Stop mowin' the front yard, an' go out in the barn and clean off the horses 'til I call you, an' if the horses are all cleaned off already, clean off the cows. Do somethin' to take you out of sight of these windows.

VOICE. (*Off R.*) Yes'm.

MRS. SIMMONS. Now mebbe you can't 'tend to your work.

(*BETSY mournfully souses cloth in pail, and wrings it out. MRS. SIMMONS slaps dust-rag against picture on wall.*)

BETSY. (*Slowly and seriously*) Mrs. Simmons, if it was the Spring of the year, an' you was a single girl, an' wanted to marry the hired man, an' he didn't ask you, what would you do?

MRS. SIMMONS. Take him by the ear and souse him in the rainwater hogshead 'til he did. For the land sakes don't look as if you was thinkin' that over! You ain't got no more sense of humor

80 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

than—(MRS. KIRKLAND *enters L., wearing elaborate negligee and boudoir cap*) Gracious me, Rhoda, what you got on a baby's bunnet for?

MRS. KIRKLAND. It's an imported boudoir cap. I brought one for you almost like it.

MRS. SIMMONS. I'll have to decline it, sister. If our minister ever called and undertook to hold a session of prayer, an' me a wearin' a thing like that, he'd be as confused as the tower of Babel, though I must say that rosette looks as fascinatin' to me as sin to the sinner. (BETSY *exits L., with pail, slowly and with her slippers flapping*) Mary Anne might see fit to wear it, but she don't have much chance at furbelows since she went to work in the hospital.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Seating herself*) Tell me about Mary Anne. That's what I came down for more than anything else, to find out how she is and all about her. Oh, my dear, you don't know what a blow it was to me, right in the midst of the season, to have her give it all up and insist on coming back here to study to be a nurse!

MRS. SIMMONS. An' she'll keep it up 'til she gets her diploma, I reckon. 'Tain't like her to turn back, once she gets started.

MRS. KIRKLAND. Why, the very week she left New York she refused two perfectly eligible young men without even taking the trouble to think them over! Of course, no one would stop to think over Teddy Farnum, but that Harvard half-back was a real catch. Sometimes I think I'd like to wring Bill Barkeley's neck.

MRS. SIMMONS. Oh, I don't lay her takin' up nursin' to Bill Barkeley. She's got over carin' for him, and smiles just as cheery as ever, as far as I can see. If she hain't got over it, I don't see how she stands it the way she does with him around in town this Summer engaged to another girl.

(*Enter MISS SLISSY from L. She has a pin-cushion*

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 81

attached to her waist, and her mouth is full of pins most of the time while she talks. In her hands she holds a flowered laced waist which she is making for MRS. SIMMONS.)

MISS SLISSY. (*It is plainly apparent from her eager tone that she has been listening the other side of the door*) Talkin' about Mary Anne and Bill Barkeley?

MRS. SIMMONS. No, Sairy Applegate Slissy, I was talkin' about Betsy and our former hired man.

MISS SLISSY. Do you mind if I see whether this waist is the right width across the back?

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Rises with a sigh*) I reckon not, though you measured my back an hour ago.

MRS. KIRKLAND. Do you wear those felt shoes for comfort, Miss Slissy, or merely for the pleasure of slipping in unobserved?

MISS SLISSY. (*Pottering with waist while she talks*) Well, I always was too kind hearted to interrupt folks when they're tellin' anything interestin' an' confidential. Gracious me, Mis' Simmons, I do believe you grow broader through the shoulders right along. I'm afraid I'll have to set a piece in. (*Pins the waist to MRS. SIMMONS' back while she measures*)

MRS. SIMMONS. Ouch! You needn't puncture my spine. I need it.

MISS SLISSY. Excuse me, I'm so used to stickin' myself that I don't mind it at all. Folks do say, Mis' Kirkland, that Mary Anne a comin' back here and takin' a job in our new hospital looks as if she'd had some kind of a serious set-back. (MRS. SIMMONS *moves with an impatient exclamation*) Please stand still, Mis' Simmons, I almost stuck you again. Folks do say it's because of Bill Barkeley's gettin' engaged to Elaine Jewett, but then I don't think we'd ought to believe all we hear, without other evidence, do you?

82 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Pleasantly*) Of course not. For instance, folks do say that you have an unfortunate habit of being interested in affairs that are none of your business, Miss Slissy, but I shouldn't think of believing it without other evidence.

MISS SLISSY. Well, I should like to know who says that! There ain't a word of truth in it.—I s'pose you've heard that Elaine Jewett's Pa lost his money last winter?

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Blandly ignoring the question*) I like the way you've laid out those nasturtium beds this Summer, Amanda.

MISS SLISSY. Sometimes I wish I lived in New York where you could get the news up to date. Some say it was Bill Barkeley's money that helped Mr. Jewett to start up again, but there's no tellin' whether 'twas or not. I reckon it'll be a good many years before the Jewetts is able to hold their heads so high as they used to, an' they're havin' some extry trouble right now with the youngest girl a bein' sick an' all.

MRS. KIRKLAND. Amanda, I hadn't heard that Trella Jewett was worse.

MISS SLISSY. She had a relapse yesterday, an' ain't expected to get well. I said when Elaine Jewett was hirin' that new dressmaker that's moved here, that somethin' would happen to her to pay for it.

(BETSY, *much disheveled, her arms and sleeves wet and her hair falling down, enters at L.*)

BETSY. (*Breathlessly*) It's all right, Mis' Simmons!

MRS. SIMMONS. What's all right?

BETSY. The hired man says he'll marry me, but I had to duck him in the rainwater hogshead twice before he'd promise. (*Wrings water out of her sleeve*)

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 83

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Horried*) For the lan's sake, she did it! She actually went and did it just because I told her too! She ain't got any more sense of humor than a motherin' duck a tryin' to make a two days' old chicken swim.

BETSY. The duck can't always make the chicken go into the water, but I made him. He kicked somethin' awful. Don't you reckon I'd ought to have a new dress to be married in?

MISS SLISSY. (*Folding up MRS. SIMMONS' waist*) If you're askin' my opinion, I do. Time was when I wouldn't sew for hired-girls, but work is slack with me now, seein' I ain't got Miss Jewett's trowso I'd depended on to do.

BETSY. Thursday is my afternoon off, if you want to fit me up then.

MRS. SIMMONS. Betsy, if you'll take Miss Slissy to your room to finish bastin' my waist, you can have the rest of her time for the afternoon, or anyway until she's ready to go.

MISS SLISSY. Dear me! Mis' Simmons, that does certainly prove you're kind hearted, in spite of most everybody sayin' you're growin' cranky in your old age.

BETSY. Come on then, Miss Slissy, I'm a plannin' to have a weddin' dress, an' a goin' away dress, and a stayin' at home dress, an' a silk night gown that's all crawly when you put it on! An' you can make a necktie for the hired man as my weddin' present. (*Exit BETSY L., with MISS SLISSY following*)

MARY ANNE. (*Enters C., peeping off L. as she does so*) Has she gone? (*MARY ANNE wears a long gray cape over a nurse's uniform*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Springs up, delighted*) Why, Marion, my dear, where did you drop from? (*Embraces MARY ANNE*)

MARY ANNE. (*Brightly*) It wasn't a drop—it was a climb. The hospital is at the foot of the hill.

84 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

(*Puts off the cape*) Oh, Auntie, dear, I'm so glad to see you again! The Superintendent heard you were coming and gave me a half-hour of liberty to welcome you. Mumsey, I'm starving! Can't I have a slice of bread and jam to eat while I talk?

MRS. SIMMONS. Just opened a jar of quince this mornin'. (*Exits L.*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. Don't they feed you enough in that hospital, Marian? You're losing flesh.

MARY ANNE. Useless flesh, then, that was only a nuisance to carry around. What is left is good bone and muscle, made by the wholesome *sensible* food we're living on. All the same, I sometimes long for forbidden jam, and return to it like the Israelites to the flesh-pots of Egypt. (*As MRS. SIMMONS brings in the bread and jam*) Oh, Mumsey, that looks simply entrancing!

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Pleased*) I reckon you'll find it tasty. I've got to go right back and drive the speckled rooster out of the geranium patch. He's struttin' through it for the seventh time this mornin'. (*Exits L.*)

(MARY ANNE *makes a pretense of eating, then pushes the plate aside.*)

MRS. KIRKLAND. (*Observing her keenly*) Well, little Marian?

MARY ANNE. (*With forced lightness*) Well, big Aunt Rhoda?

MRS. KIRKLAND. I see through it all—your laughter, your cheerfulness, even the appetite and the slice of bread that you didn't want. It deceived your mother, but sometimes I think I understand you better than even your own flesh and blood.

MARY ANNE. Don't worry about me Auntie. There's no cure in the world for heartache like good hard work. I'm getting over it.

MRS. KIRKLAND. *Really* getting over it?

MARY ANNE. Not in the way you mean, perhaps.

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 85

I'm one of the girls that when she cares once has to keep on caring.

MRS. KIRKLAND. Come, be sensible! Give up this idea of a vocation. Shed that nurse's gown, and let me take you traveling for a year.

MARY ANNE. Oh, no, dear Auntie, I don't want to try to run away from myself. And it's good for me there at the hospital. I see so much real trouble that my own selfish sorrow looks small and petty beside it. I'm working to heal others, and that's the way to heal myself, the only way. I'm sure of it, even if it does take time.

MRS. SIMMONS. (*Enters L.*) Made a grab for that rooster, and scared him as bad as if I'd pulled out all his tail fathers. Guess next time he'll know enough to leave them flower-beds alone. Rhoda, the horse is all harnessed and I've got to go down to the store for a dollar's worth of sugar that Betsy didn't know enough to tell me we were out of. I don't s'pose you feel like comin' too? I'm going in the buckboard.

MRS. KIRKLAND. In the buckboard? Delicious. Just as soon as I get into my dust coat and a hat. I haven't had a ride in a buckboard since I was a girl. But—(*Hesitates*) Mary Anne——

MARY ANNE. Run right along, Auntie. I must go back soon anyhow, and to-morrow is my free day and we can visit for hours.

MRS. KIRKLAND. What fun to drive old Dobbin again.

(*Exit MRS. SIMMONS and MRS. KIRKLAND L.*)

MARY ANNE. (*Left alone, she walks over to bird-cage near the window. Chirrup to the bird*) Sing for your missy, Flubdub! Sing for joy because you aren't like the poor folks in the hospital. You don't get dreadful things the matter with you like appendicitis, and meningitis, and tonsilitis. I don't

86 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

even believe you have heartache-itis, Birdie, and that's where you're very lucky indeed! (*Turns her attention to a flower growing in a pot*) Why, poor little rosy-posy, you don't look as thrifty as you did when I left home! Do they forget to water and take care of you, or don't they know that flowers have feelings and like to be petted and encouraged the same as other people? (*Picks off a withered leaf*) There, now I've trimmed your scolding locks. Cheer up! Think how much better you're going to look! Oh, there's a beautiful bud you've been hiding away in your green leaves, you little fraud, you! And you're trying to make me think you had done nothing at all but get discouraged! Now hurry up and bloom your prettiest, and I'll take you—where do you think? To a little sick girl in the hospital, and perhaps you'll talk to her of the sunshine and the green leaves outside, and hearten her to get well again. That's something worth living for, isn't it? (*Starts to sing "Go, Pretty Rose," as she still works over the flower. BARKELEY appears in door c., and stands watching her*)

BARKELEY. (*As she pauses*) Mary Anne!

MARY ANNE. You! (*Startled, presses hand to heart*)

BARKELEY. I—frightened you?

MARY ANNE. (*Struggling for composure*) No, only—coming in like that—so suddenly—Has anything happened? Is Trella worse?

BARKELEY. Trella is better, the crisis is passed.

MARY ANNE. Oh, that's good! How pleased Elaine will be!

BARKELEY. I haven't seen Elaine since I came from New York this morning. Trella's father told me.

MARY ANNE. She was so busy caring for her sister, I suppose.

BARKELEY. I didn't wait to see her, Mary Anne, because—while I sat there—I caught a glimpse of

you, in your long gray cloak, coming up the hill. It brought back all I've been fighting against these three months.

MARY ANNE. (*Tremulously turning away*) I don't understand.

BARKELEY. Are you sure you don't? I told you that night of the dance that I loved you. What story against me caused you to treat me as you did, I don't know. But I do know this—that there was love in your eyes when I saw you again and you asked my forgiveness. Mary Anne, if I had only been free then to speak——

MARY ANNE. (*Desperately*) Talking over the past is useless, and old-fashioned. People never do it nowadays, and I must be starting back to the hospital.

BARKELEY. There was love in your eyes when you looked at me. (*Seizes her hand*)

MARY ANNE. Let me go, please, please!

BARKELEY. (*Masterfully*) Look at me again, Mary Anne. (*She does so, then turns away and covers her face with her hands*) I knew it, Mary Anne. Listen! It's a mistake for us to wreck our two lives when we love each other. Elaine will understand when I tell her, she must understand. If she doesn't, why, well we'll not think of her, that's all. There's only you and I in the whole world, little girl——

MARY ANNE. (*Interrupts*) Only you and I, and duty. The knowledge that we must do what is right, Bill.

BARKELEY. You think——

MARY ANNE. I think because your word is given, you must be true to it.

BARKELEY. (*Sadly, after a moment's pause*) It wouldn't be you if you thought otherwise.

MARY ANNE. You think so too, Bill. You know it.

88 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

BARKELEY. (*Bows his head, scarcely able to control his voice*) Yes, but it's hard!

MARY ANNE. If every battle were easy in this world, there'd be no glory in winning. Good-bye Bill. You're going back to Elaine. You're going to care for her, and make her happy.

BARKELEY. I'm going to try. But oh, little Mary Anne—(*Holds out his arms, and speaks pleadingly*) just once!

MARY ANNE. (*Shakes her head*) We can't compromise with duty. Good-bye, Bill.

BARKELEY. Good-bye. (*Turns and rushes from the room in despair*)

MARY ANNE. (*Softly, sadly*) Oh, Bill, you'll never know what it cost me to let you go! (*Leans against mantelpiece, her face hidden*)

MISS SLISSY. (*Heard off L.*) Well, at the price I'm givin' you, I shan't make more'n bread an' salt on my work, but I always was kind hearted. (*MARY ANNE dries her eyes hastily as MISS SLISSY enters. Enter MISS SLISSY L.*) Well, my goodness, Mary Anne, what are you home for this time of day? I expect you've lost your job to the hospital, well, I always said you was too finicky and high and mighty to give satisfaction.

MARY ANNE. I haven't lost my job, Miss Slissy. I was up all night on an operation case, and the Superintendent gave me this time off to meet my Aunt.

MISS SLISSY. I thought I just saw your Aunt drivin' off with your Ma in the buckboard. You ain't be'n havin' an attack of influenzy, lately, have you, Mary Anne?

MARY ANNE. Why, no, certainly not.

MISS SLISSY. Your eyes look so red I thought it was either influenzy or cryin'. But mebbe 'tis from settin' up nights at the hospital. There ain't nothin' like losin' sleep to cause a girl to fade, 'specially if she's like you—one of them kind that fade early

anyhow. I look just as young as I did ten years ago, an' mebbe younger. Well, I've got to trot along, or I shan't get nothin' done about sendin' for them samples of weddin' goods. Good-day, Mary Anne.

MARY ANNE. Good-day, Miss Slissy.

MISS SLISSY. You can tell your Aunt that like as not I'll drop in to-morrow after she's unpacked her trunk to look at some of the city styles. Though I must say she ain't what I call my style of a woman. These top-loftical ones like her an' Elaine Jewett most always come a cropper 'fore they're through with it, an' I'm just a waitin'—(*Meets ELAINE just as she reaches door c.*) Well, my goodness, Miss Jewett, how do you do?

ELAINE. Very well, thanks. Don't let me detain you, Miss Slissy.

MISS SLISSY. I shan't. When a dressmakèr is as popular and rushed as I am, with trowsos and such things, she can't afford to waste her time on those as ain't regular customers. Good-day! (*Sails out, triumphantly*)

MARY ANNE. Do come in, Miss Jewett. I have only ten minutes before I have to go back on duty, but——

ELAINE. I'm very fortunate to find you here at all.

MARY ANNE. How is your sister?

ELAINE. The doctor assured me this morning that there was now every chance of a permanent recovery.

MARY ANNE. I'm so glad to hear that! She's suffered for so long.

ELAINE. I didn't come here, though, to talk about Trella. Oh, Mary Anne, I've been so unhappy these past three months!

MARY ANNE. Unhappy! Why, but I thought—until your sister grew so ill, that you—that you—(*Hesitates*)

90 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

ELAINE. (*Completing MARY ANNE's sentence*) Had everything I wanted? It did look like it, didn't it? I'd set my heart on landing Bill Barkeley, and I did it, only to find that I was more miserable than ever before in my life.

MARY ANNE. (*Surprised*) Why, Miss Jewett!

ELAINE. I've just stumbled across a great truth, Mary Anne. People who think only of themselves, work only for themselves, live only for themselves, are always miserable. I tried to cheat myself by saying that I was justified in what I did, to win money to give Trella the care she needed. But Trella wouldn't let me deceive myself that way. She made me see she'd be happier in poverty, and respecting me, than she would with all the money I could give her, if I married Bill. So it narrowed down to the struggle between conscience and my own mercenary self. And self would have won out, if it hadn't been for Trella's terrible illness. My sister has been the only unselfish love of my life. Oh, Mary Anne, three nights ago, when it seemed she was going from me, I thought my very soul was going with her! And I knelt down and prayed to God, and promised him that if she were spared to me, I'd give Bill Barkeley back to the girl he really loved. You, Mary Anne Simmons, it has always been you. I knew it, even when I tricked him into an engagement, in my baseness even using poor Trella as an unconscious instrument to further my ends, heaven forgive me! You ought to have seen his face when I met him out there just now, and told him he was free. It was the most uncomplimentary thing I've ever experienced.

MARY ANNE. (*In intense half-whisper of ecstasy*) You told Bill—he was free?

ELAINE. Why, little Mary Anne! Does it mean that much to you? You look as if you had stepped from earth straight into heaven! And to think I've kept you from such happiness all these miserable

THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE. 91

months! Can you forgive me for the unworthy part I've played?

MARY ANNE. If I had played it, I wonder if I would have been brave enough to make amends as you have done. Oh, Elaine, I love you! (*Goes into ELAINE'S arms*)

(*There is a moment's eloquent silence.*)

HENDERSON. (*Opens door c., which MISS SLISSY had closed on making her exit*) Knocked twice but nobody heard me.

MARY ANNE. Oh, come right in, Mr. Henderson!

HENDERSON. Well, say! That nurse's costume is most becoming! Your face blooms out of it like a rose.

ELAINE. Doesn't it. It was so good of you to come down to Farmdale, Lloyd! You've heard, of course, that Trella is better?

HENDERSON. Yes, I've heard, and I've got some news for Trella that will be a better medicine than even that famous new doctor can give. Her novel is accepted. I saw the publisher this morning, and he thinks it's bound to be a hit.

ELAINE. And you came down from New York just on purpose to tell her this? I don't believe I've half appreciated my friends in the past, but from now on—I'm going to be different. You'll see.

HENDERSON. Don't change too much, Elaine. There are some of us who like you quite well as you are. Bill Barkeley's a lucky chap! Oh, by the way, won't you ride back in my car, or have you other company?

ELAINE. Bill Barkeley is waiting in the arbor for me to come out. (*Stops him as he starts to turn away*) But we'll just leave him here with Mary Anne, Lloyd. I fancy she has something to say to him alone.

HENDERSON. (*Puzzled*) With Miss Simmons? Why——

92 THE BLOSSOMING OF MARY ANNE.

MARY ANNE. (*Frustrated*) Oh, but I haven't anything to say to him!

ELAINE. Well, I'm sure he has something to say to you. Shall I tell him to come in.

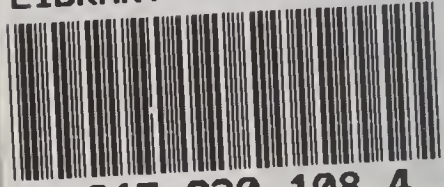
MARY ANNE. Why, of course, but—(*BARKELEY enters c., unperceived by her, as she shyly faces away from her guests*) Oh, everybody stay! Please stay!

ELAINE. (*Motions BARKELEY to silence*) I can't stay, but before I go, I'd like to return something that I borrowed for a little while. May I? (*Takes BARKELEY by the hand. Brings him to MARY ANNE. Joins their hands. Goes out softly with HENDERSON, and closes the door behind her*)

BARKELEY. Mary Anne! (*Without a word, she goes into his arms*)

CURTAIN.

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